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GODDESS CULTS IN ANCIENT INDIA

GODDESS CULTS IN ANCIENT INDIA

(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE FIRST SEVEN CENTURIES A.D.)

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J.N. TIWARI

पुस्तकालय
पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय

With A Foreword By

A.L. BASHAM

Emeritus Professor in Asian Civilizations
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SUNDEEP PRAKASHAN
DELHI

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TO

"THE GREAT MOTHER"

Devi prapannārtihare prasīda
Prasīda mātar jagato' khilasya,
Prasīda viśveśvari pāhi viśvaṁ
Tvamīśvarī devi carācarasya.

["O Goddess, who removest the sufferings of those who take refuge in thee, be gracious ! Be gracious, O Mother of the whole world; be gracious, O Lord of the universe; protect the universe ! O Goddess, thou art the lord of all that is moveable and immoveable !"]

Devī-māhātmya, XI. 3
(*Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 88.2)

Foreword

The Mother Goddess appears in varied form in the numerous branches of Hinduism. In Eastern India many millions of people look on the Great Mother Goddess, under such names as Durgā, Kālī, Bhavānī, Pārvatī, Umā *etc.*, as the chief divinity, the main means through which the power of Godhead (personified as Śiva, her husband) manifests itself and is active in the world; and her devotees are quite numerous in other parts of India also. Lakṣmī, the spouse of Viṣṇu, is widely worshipped and respected, as the bringer of good fortune. Her incarnation as Sītā, in association with Rāma, is an object of great reverence, as the ideal of womanhood, the perfect wife. Lesser goddesses are far from unimportant, especially in Eastern India—we think of the beautiful Sarasvatī, patroness of learning and the arts, whose annual festival is still as popular as ever in Bengal, and such folk divinities as Manasā, the goddess of Snakes, Śītalā, the rather sinister goddess of smallpox, Ṣaṣṭhī, who protects pregnant women and little children if properly worshipped. The list of these goddesses might be multiplied indefinitely by the inclusion of innumerable minor divinities, some of them revered only in a single village, who are loosely identified by the theologians as minor aspects of the Great Mother Goddess, and thus find some sort of status in the enormous pantheon of Hindu mythology.

That the myth-making propensities of Hinduism are far from extinct has been shown in recent years by the appearance of a new goddess, Santoṣī Mātā, whose cult has appeared during the last twenty years over the whole of northern India, and who is not unknown in the South. This friendly goddess, who bestows practical and material benefits in return for a comparatively easy *vrata*, has already been given a genealogy, as the daughter of Gaṇeśa, and a ritual of her own. Where she came from and how and why her cult began are quite unknown to the best of my present knowledge, and might form the subject of much further research.

It may be, moreover, that Santoṣī Mātā is not the last new manifestation of this ancient cult, for a year or two ago, in one of the bazaars of northern India, I found a calendar picture depicting a beautiful four-armed woman, holding in her hand such emblems as a plough and a cog-wheel and surrounded by a varied group of devotees ranging from peasants to doctors or scientists in their white coats. This figure was entitled *Śrama-devatā*, 'The Goddess of Hard Work'. Evidently she represents the efforts of some unknown myth-maker to meet the needs of India at the present time in the framework of Hindu mythology, but I have not heard of this new goddess since and it may be that her cult was still-born.

It is easy to take a superficial view of these manifestations of the Indian religious genius, and look on them as objectionable survivals of outdated attitudes to the world, as obstacles to progress, or as childish manifestations of ancient ignorance which time and education will soon eradicate. The Mother Goddess cults of modern India are certainly survivals of a very ancient stratum of religious life, going back to neolithic times, when, as archaeology proves, the Earth Mother, manifesting herself in many forms, was worshipped by primitive agriculturists over a wide area of the world's surface, reaching from the Indus Valley to Western Europe. The fact that this very ancient cult has adapted itself to changing conditions in India, has evolved with the centuries in many new forms according to the needs of the ordinary Indian, and is still capable of change and development, is surely sufficient evidence that it has met, and continues to meet, a great need in the Indian mind, a need for psychological security which, for the ordinary man, cannot be met by scientific knowledge or rational speculation. The child cries with pain when nature compels it to leave its mother's womb, and the psychologist might interpret the cult of the Mother Goddess (and indeed many other aspects of Indian religious life) in this light, as a symbolic return to a state of prenatal security and bliss subconsciously remembered. But like all 'debunking' explanations of the religious life, this one fails to account for many aspects of the Mother Goddess cult in India.

The Mother Goddess, and the practices and beliefs associated with her in her many froms, form in fact one of India's responses to human experience. She is Mother Earth, bounteous and rich in food (*Annapūrṇā*). In other forms, she symbolizes the fiercer and crueller aspects of nature (*Bhairavī*). She is the dark spirit of time, destroying all things (*Kālī*). She is old age and death (*Cāmuṇḍā*). She is the spirit of divine justice; imagined as a girl of sixteen, stern but beautiful, riding her lion to destory evil and darkness (*Durgā*). She represents the ideals of womanhood, the loving mother caring for her fantastic children Skanda and Gaṇeśa, the beautiful devoted wife listening to her lord's instructions (*Pārvatī*). If we consider even a few of her forms we realize what a wide range of human experience she reflects, and why she retains her popularity even in the twentieth century, and is likely to retain it for many years to come. If we included subsidiary forms of the Mother Goddess, such as Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Manasā and Śītalā, it may well be that she commands almost as much respect and worship in India as does Viṣṇu in all his incarnations.

The history of the Mother Goddess cults in India, and of the mythology surrounding them, has many obscurities, and much still cannot be explained. It is clear that she was widely worshipped in various forms in the earliest civilizations of the Sub-continent. With the advent of the Aryans she seems to have lost ground somewhat, though she was never completely forgotten. Steadily, from Gupta times onwards, she regained her importance and prestige to become one of the most important of Hindu divinities, the personification of the power (*Śakti*) of the Divine.

It is in an attempt to elucidate some of the obscurer phases of her history that Dr. J.N. Tiwari has written this book, based on the admirable thesis which he prepared some years ago under my supervision, as a student of the Australian National University. Scholarly and thorough, his work throws much light on many dark corners of the subject. The author has maintained very high scholarly standards, and he writes lucidly and clearly; thus his work will be of interest even to the non-specialist. I heartily commend his book, as a very important contribution to the history of Indian religion.

Canberra, 1979.

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Asian Civilizations,
The Australian National University.

Preface

The aim of the present book is to study some significant aspects of goddess cults in ancient India, with special reference to the first seven centuries of the Christian era. This study originally grew out of an enquiry into the popular religious life in North India during the rule of the Imperial Guptas. However, it soon became obvious that since the Gupta period only marked the culmination of cultural trends that had been growing in the two or three centuries preceding it, a strict chronological reference for various aspects of religious life during the period was not desirable. Similarly, the geographical framework also could not be precisely limited to North India, because ramifications of several popular cults crossed this boundary and extended to the Deccan and South. I chose to especially investigate goddess cults because these appeared to me to be probably the most representative feature of the popular religious life and manifested some very significant developments during the period. But while the subject was attractive, the difficulties in its treatment were also obvious. Unlike the 'higher' religions with a developed theology, a rich liturgy and often an organized sect—which found more frequent notice in literature, the goddess cults, by virtue of their being closer to the masses, had few of these benefits. Their history, therefore, could be reconstructed only in a vague outline, on the basis of meagre evidence, often of very uncertain nature.

Worship of the Goddess in various forms is undoubtedly one of the most important and fascinating aspects of the history of Indian religions. It is attested to from the very beginning of the known history of the country and still occupies a prominent place in the religious life of the Indian people. Feminine divinities were indeed worshipped in some form practically all over the ancient world, and many have considered this to be among the earliest forms, if not the earliest form, of man's religion. But nowhere do we find such bewildering variety and so long and complex a history as in India. There is, to be sure, also plenty of literature on the subject of the Indian Goddess, and there is even evidence of an increased interest in recent years, for various reasons, both in India and abroad. But most researchers betray a very simplistic approach in dealing with the various intricacies of the subject and readily supply all kinds of naive generalizations and 'debunking' explanations. It is often forgotten that the Indian Goddess has too long and varied a history to fit into the narrow straitjacket of such explanations. The Goddess worship in India scarcely has the kind of unity and uniformity which is often assumed for it. It is at best a loose federation of cults and embraces within its fold elements of the most diverse nature and origin. I have designed the present study on a frank admission of the complexity of the Indian phenomenon, and it is our approach that we can only hope to fully appreciate it by intensively investigating significant 'moments' in its history and closely studying as many individual figures as possible. In my opinion, the early centuries of the Christian era—the first seven centuries approximately—provide just such a historical 'moment'.

The book is clearly divisible into two parts. The first part, consisting of chapters 1 and 2, concentrates on certain general aspects of the subject, such as the wide prevalence of belief in goddesses and of their cults and the gradual evolution of the cult of the Great Goddess. It is necessary to emphasize that while there is sufficient evidence to speak in terms of a popular cult of the Great Goddess from the Gupta period onwards, the nature of this cult and its developed ideology affected the goddess cults in general, so that it often becomes difficult to ascertain whether a particular piece of evidence is with reference to a purely local goddess or to that of the Great Goddess. The second part of the book, comprising the last three chapters, is devoted to the investigation of cults of some specific goddesses, such as the Mātṛs, the 'Nude Squatting Goddess', who must for the present remain unnamed for lack of adequate notice of her in inscribed records or literature but whose figures betray a widespread cult, and lastly Koṭavī, who was an ancient goddess of the Tamils. For obvious reasons, I have had to be very selective in my choice of individual goddesses for special investigation. I decided in favour of some of the more obscure and less ivestigated figures, about whom literature gives inadequate or vague information but who are likely to have been closer to the popular religious life than several better known divinities.

My investigation has frequently taken me to earlier periods, and sometimes to later ones, to ascertain the nature of various trends and character of goddesses studied. Since each chapter forms a complete study in itself, I have sometimes had to refer to the same materials in different contexts. However, adequate cross-references have been provided to show the interconnections. While every single aspect studied in the book is complete in itself, taken together they illuminate an important aspect of the popular religious life in ancient India during the early centuries of the Christian era.

I have not entered in the present book into any specific discussion of the Śākta-Tantric tradition, because I did not find it germane to my enquiry. The terms Śākta and Tantric defy precise definition, and, for that reason, have often been quite arbitrarily used by modern writers. Perhaps it would not be wise to identify the two, as some have done, but it would be just as unwise to sharply distinguish one from the other, because there is much overlapping between them. But my reticence has been for two principal reasons: firstly, howsoever one may define Śākta-Tantric tradition, this label cannot be applied indiscriminately to any and every cult of a feminine divinity, even one of predominantly malevolent kind; and, secondly, as a recognizable religious movement, it appears rather late in the period of my special investigation, in fact, towards the very close of it. The concept and cult of the Great Goddess, in the form it appears in the *Devī māhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, could perhaps be called Śākta, in the sense it presents the idea of Supreme Power as feminine, but, as I have said also in the chapter 2 dealing with the subject, the text does not betray narrow sectarian features, and it certainly has little trace of the characteristic Tantric ritualism, based on mystical-magical symbolism, with which the so-called Śākta ideology is generally found associated.

A few words may be added about the sources and their dating. For my study, I have used both literary and archaeological sources. The latter have the advantage of relatively more accurate reference to a time-space framework. When vital to a specific point, a brief discussion on the dates of texts has been introduced into the book. But, generally speaking, I have adopted the commonly accepted datings of various texts. I favour the generally accepted view that Kālidāsa flourished in the Gupta period and also that which assigns the dramas attributed to Bhāsa to a period not much earlier. The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya may have a nucleus going back to the Maurya-Śuṅga times, but the available text, in my opinion, should not be dated before the Christian era. Again, while the dating of the early Purāṇas, like *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Viṣṇu* and *Matsya*, as suggested by Hazra appears to me to be generally sound, I am inclined to place the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and to a certain extent the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, a little later than he has done. The dates of the medical texts are uncertain, but they also have been often ascribed to my period. The use of the *Mahābhārata* for the study of this period also needs explanation. The critical edition has stabilized the text as it probably stood towards the end of the Gupta period, though it does contain materials belonging to earlier chronological strata. But until a reliable stratification is obtained, I feel that much of the evidence contained in the epic may be more safely referred to the first three or four centuries of the Christian era than to the centuries preceding it. My real justification for the use of various textual sources for the period comes from the fact that they frequently corroborate each other and the archaeological sources.

This book is substantially based on my thesis, entitled "Studies in Goddess Cults in Northern India, with special reference to the first seven centuries A.D.", originally submitted in 1971 for Ph.D. degree in Asian Civilization at the Australian National University, Canberra. I have since tried to keep in touch with researches in the subject and updated the book where necessary. But, generally speaking, I have not felt any need to revise or alter my main conclusions. The chapter on the Nude Goddess is the only exception, which is now substantially revised; I have taken note of some important new material that has been published since and also reconsidered, expanded and refined some of my earlier arguments. Some important publications which came to my notice rather late have been included in the Bibliography.

Two other pieces of information, to which my attention was drawn after the chapter on the Nude Goddess was printed, may be noted here, because they appear significant. I have noted Chapgar's information that the Siddan Kotte figure is worshipped locally as *Lajjā Gaurī*, and also Sankalia's conjecture that this name may be really a euphemism (see below, pp. 188-9 and 216). I have also imagined (p. 201) that the Śivaite affiliation indicated by some figures but especially by the *Matsya Purāṇa* evidence would appear to suggest that a truely old tradition survives in this modern name. What is possible is that the name *Lajjā* itself contains suggestions of the alien, non-Aryan nature of the Nude Goddess. It is, of course, well known that this name appears prominently among names of the Great Goddess, and it is also not unlikely that it comes primarily from the same source—personifications of mental or moral traits or elements of auspiciousness and prosperity—as many other similar goddesses (cf. *Devī-māhātmya, V.* 44– *Mārk. P.*, 82. 22 : *Yā devī sarvabhūteṣu lajjārūpeṇa saṁsthitā, etc.*, and other names of the Goddess appearing in the same hymn; also below, ch. 1, pp. 2-3). But in view of the name *Lajjā Gaurī* for the "Nude Goddess", a different source is also indicated. Sanskrit lexicons give *lañja* in the sense of a tail as well as a harlot. The word is associated with a series of Austric words *lāṅgūla, lāṅgala, etc.*, all meaning primarily a tail. Kuiper and, following him, Turner and others derive them from Munda source (see Kuiper, F.B.J., *Proto-Munda Words in Sanskrit Language*, Amsterdam 1948, p. 127; also Turner, R.L., *Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Languages*, London 1966, p. 639) *Lajjā* in *Lajjā Gaurī*, therefore, could be a Sanskritized form of the Austric word *lañja*, and the use of the name *Gaurī* would also appear to evince the process which I have called "brahmanisation", but which modern sociologists describe variously as "universalization" or "sanskritization". The other information relates to the use of the word *chāyā* is the sense of image (see below, pp. 199 and fn 83). The Pauni pillar inscription of Mahākṣatrapa Rupiamma, paleographically datable to 2nd cent. A.D., refers to the setting up of a *chāyā-stambha*, evidently a pillar bearing image (see *EI*, *XXXVII*, pp. 200-3), and the word is used in the same sense also in an inscription of the Ikṣvāku king Rudrapurisadatta (*EI*, XXXIV, p. 20). It is interesting that both the inscriptions are near contemporaries of the figures of the Nude Goddess and come from the same general area where her figures are most concentrated.

It remains for me to perform the very pleasant task of acknowledging the help and encouragement received from various scholars and well-wishers. Miss Mary Hutchinson, Mrs. Bridget Sack, Dr. B.J. Terwiel and Dr. Ian Proudfoot helped me with translations of materials in German and French, Dr. E. Sa. Visswan athan helped me in using materials in Tamil, and with Dr. T. Rajapatirana I had discussions on some Sanskrit passages. I am indebted to all of them. I am similarly indebted to Prof. R.S. Sharma, Prof. David Lorenzen and Dr. Thomas Coburn whose many comments and criticisms helped me retouch and improve the text in several places. I am particularly thankful to Prof. V.S. Pathak, Prof. J.W. de Jong, Dr. Stella Kramrisch and Sri Ratinath Jha whose criticisms and suggestions proved of much help in recasting my arguments in the chapter on the Nude Goddess. My deepest debt of gratitude is to my supervisor, Prof. A.L. Basham; he was always available when I needed him and I have immensely benefitted from his unfailing guidance. He has also obliged me by contributing a foreword to this book. I do not have words to adequately express my thanks to him.

Many other friends and well-wishers have given me encouragement and support during the preparation of the original dissertation and, later, in the course of its publication. It is not possible to mention all of them, but they all know how thankful I am. I should, however, like to mention the names of Dr. S.A.A. Rizvi, Dr. R.D. Dikshit, Dr. Ashim

Roy, Mr. P.S. Dwivedi, Dr. A.Q. Rafiqi, Mrs. Malti Jain, Mrs. Jocelyn Bergin, Dr. Diana Eck, Dr. David Kinsley, Mr. Oscar Shaftel and my B.H.U. colleagues Dr. K.K. Sinha, Dr. P.C. Pant, Dr. Maheswari Prasad, Dr. Vidula Jayaswal, Dr. B.P. Singh, Dr. Kalyan Krishna and Shri S.C. Ghildiyal, who gave me various kinds of help and encouraged me to publish the book.

I am thankful to Shri Swadesh Prasad of 'Sundeep Prakashan', Delhi, for readily agreeing to publish my book. Apparently to fit into his tight printing schedule, he also took upon himself the full responsibility of proof-reading, little realizing the special nature of the book. This has resulted in unusually large number of misprints and several ugly errors. But however, they have occured, as author I own the moral responsibility for them and crave the indulgence of my readers. I did think at one stage of providing an Errata, but had to abandon the idea, again due to the publisher's tight printing schedule and shortage of time. A full Errata would have been very long and cumbrous anyway and perhaps quite brothersome to use. I must, however, warn the readers against one type of mistake. At many place in the chapters 1 to 3, crossreferences to materials elsewhere retain the page numbers as given in the mass., instead of being corrected in accordance with the printed version; but discerning readers, I am sure, will be able to locate the intended places. When the publishers were made aware of the many mistakes creeping into the printed version, they let me read a proof of the last two chapters of the book; and I hope these will be found relatively free from error. The diacritical marks for Tamil words in the chapter on Koṭavī also posed a problem, but I hope that the printer's improvisations would be found acceptable. I must add that the credit of preparing the Index also belongs to the publishers.

Since the principal evidence for the cult of the Nude Goddess in the chapter 4 is sculptural-iconographic, we have provided illustrations for better appreciation of the arguments. They are all published, and in a separate list I am giving the sources from where I have reproduced them. Here I must acknowledge with thanks the permission of the respective copyright-owners for their use : Dr. Stella Kramrisch for the Alampur figures (Pl. III, fig. 4); the Keeper, Indian Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, for the Mathura terracotta (Pl. II, figs. 2-3); Director, Deccan College Post-graduate and Research Institute. Pune, for the figures from Nevasa excavations (Pl. V, fig. 8); the Head, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture & Archaeology, Nagpur University, for the Mahurjhari (Pl. VII, fig. 12); Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Maharashtra, for the two figures from Ter (Pl. IV, figs. 5 & 6) and the two recent acquisitions in the Central Museum, Nagpur (Pl. VIII, figs. 13 & 14); Indian Museum, Calcutta, for the terracotta plaque from Bhita excavations (Pl. I, fig. 1); and the Archaeological Survey of India for the terracotta piece (Pl. V, fig. 7) and the inscribed marble figures (Pl. VII, fig. 11), both from Nagarjunikonda. I was not able to trace the copyright-owner of the Vadgaon stone relief (Pl. VI, fig. 9). Dr. Sankalia, from whose article in the *Artibus Asiae* I have reproduced it, informs that it was brought to him by Shri Inamdar of the Aundh State Museum, Maharashtra.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to the authorities of the Banaras Hindu University who granted me leave to conduct my research and to those of the Australian

National University who awarded me a Ph.D. scholarship which enabled me to complete it. I should also like to thank the officials of the Menzies Library, ANU, particularly of its reference section, who spared no pains in obtaining much-needed materials for me, often from overseas libraries.

In this context of thanksgiving and now that this book has arrived as its ultimate conclusion, I fondly remember my wife Shanti and children Manoj, Uma and 'Dolly'. In their own way, they have shared all my excitements and frustrations in the course of preparation of this work and, like me, have eagerly looked forward to this happy day. May the 'Great Mother' always be kind to them !

Varanasi
Māgha Pūrṇimā, V.S. 2041
(5 February, 1985)

J.N. Tiwari

Abbreviations

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
Ag. P.	Agni Purāṇa
AI	Ancient India (Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India)
AK	Amara-koṣa
Ar. O	Archiv Orientalni
Art. As.	Artibus Asiae
Āś. GS.	Aśvalāyana Gṛhya-sūtra
ASI-AR	Archaeological Survey of India—Annual Report
ARS	Archaeological Survey Reports by Cunningham.
ASS	Ānandāśram Sankrit Series
AV	Atharva-veda
Av. Par.	Atharva-veda Pariśiṣṭa
BBMPG	Bulletin of the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery
BDCRI	Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute
BÉFEO	Bulletin de l'École française d' Extrême-Orient
Bhā. P.	Bhāgavata Purāṇa
BMC. AI.	Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum : Ancient India, by Allan
BMC. GD.	Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum : Gupta Dynasties and Śaśāṅka, King of Gauḍa, by Allan
BMC. Gr. Scy.	Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum: Greek and Scythic Kings, by Gardner
BPWM	Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India
Bra. P.	Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa
BŚS	Baudhāyana Śrauta-sūtra (all our references to this text come from Dumont's translation of the First *Prapāṭhaka* of the third *Kāṇḍa* of the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, in ***PAPS***, vol. 98, 1954, pp. 204 ff.)
CII	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum
Dev. Bhā. P.	Devī-bhāgavata Purāṇa
DHI	Development of Hindu Iconography by Banerjea
EA	Eastern Art
EHI	Elements of Hindu Iconography by Rao
EI	Epigraphia Indica
EJ	Eranos Jahrbuch
EM	Epic Mythology by Hopkins
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics

EW	East and West
GGS	Gobhila Gṛhya-sūtra
HD	History of Dharmaśāstra by Kane
HGS	Hiraṇyakeśin Gṛhya-sūtra
HIIA	History of Indian and Indonesian Art by Coomaraswamy
HR	History of Religions
Hv.	Harivaṁśa
IA	Indian Antiquary
IC	Indian Culture
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
IPEK	Jahrbuch für Prahistorische und Ethnographische Kunst
JAAR	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JAS. L.	Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
JBRS	Journal of the Bihar Research Society
JGRS	Journal of the Gujarat Research Society
JGJRI	Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute
JIH	Journal of Indian History
JIM	Journal of Indian Museums
JISOA	Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art
JNSI	Journal of the Numismatic Society of India
JOI	Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda
JOR	Journal of Oriental Research, Madras
JRAI	Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Gt. Britain and Ireland
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Gt. Britain and Ireland
JRASB. L.	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters
JUB	Journal of the University of Bombay
JUP	Journal of the University of Poona
JUPHS	Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society
Kau. S.	Kauśika Sūtra
Mār. P.	Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa
MASI	Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India
Mat. P.	Matsya Purāṇa
Mbh.	Mahābhārata
MIC	Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization ed. by Marshall
NSP	Nirṇaya Sāgara Press
Or. Art.	Oriental Art
OST	Original Sanskrit Texts, *etc.*, by Muir
PAOS	Proceedings of the American Oriental Society
PAPS	Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society
Pār. GS.	Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra
PED	Pali—English Dictionary (PTS)

PIHC	Proceedings of the Indian History Congress
PTS	Pali Text Society
RA	Revue Archéologique
RHR	Revue de l'Histoire des Religions
RPVU	Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads by Keith
RV	Ṛg-veda
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
SBE	Sacred Books of the East
SED	Sanskrit-English Dictionary by Monier—Williams
Sel. Ins.	Select Inscriptions, *etc.*, vol. I, by Sircar
ŚGS	Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra
ŚKDr.	Śabdakalpadruma
SW	Sanskrit Wörterbuch
TA	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka
TB	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
TC	Tamil Culture
TS	Taittirīya Saṁhitā
Vai. S.	Vaitāna Sūtra
Vām. P.	Vāmana Purāṇa
Vāy. P.	Vāyu Purāṇa
Viṣ. Dh. P.	Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa
Vis. P.	Viṣṇu Purāṇa
VM	Vedic Mythology by Macdonell
VSP	Veṅkateśvara Steam Press
ZDMG	Zeitschrfit der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

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I

Proliferation of Goddess Cults

Goddess cults in North India in the first seven centuries of the Christian era are characterised by twoi mportant features: the very widespread belief in, and worship of, goddesses of various types, and the evolution of the cult of the Great Goddess. The roots of both features apparently go back to much earlier times and it may be imagined that, in some forms, the two existed concurrently at various stages of their history. Logically, however, the widespread cults of many goddesses must be presumed to have formed the foundation on which the concept of the Great Goddess could have developed.

A full account of the widespread cults of popular goddesses should be expected to include the names and natures of these goddesses and evidence of their worship in a well defined framework of time and space. But while this may be possible to some extent in the case of a few, the nature of our sources generally precludes such a definitive enquiry. It may be accepted as a general rule that the more primitive the form of a goddess and the closer she is to the illiterate tradition of the masses, the less likely is she to be recognized in literature or the sophisticated arts.[1] It is only the more popular goddesses, whose concepts have undergone a certain sophistication and whose cults, for one reason or the other, have outgrown their original narrow functions, that are likely to be noted pointedly in literature as having votaries, and whose more or less standardized iconographic forms are likely to be recognized in art. What we have in the form of evidence of widespread cults of goddesses in our period is only, generally speaking, of a very general and suggestive nature. While any number of names of goddesses of various types are available in literature and, including the terracotta female figures, many of which may represent goddesses, there are also innumerable images of these deities, such evidence is often worthless for the purposes of historical reconstruction of separate cults and can only be used in a very general way. We present below some selected evidence which, though often only of a suggestive nature

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1. Cf. the following remark about the mother goddess cults by Collingwood, R.G., *Roman Britain*, p. 129, as cited by Johnston, E.H., *JISOA*, X, 1942, p. 101: "Few religions were more widespread in the western Roman Empire; but there is no mention of it by any writer".

and not in every case strictly referrable to the time-space framework of our special investigation, nevertheless has, in our opinion, the cumulative merit of indicating with fair certainty that innumerable goddesses, mostly of local or special nature and often anonymous though occasionally also having recognizable names and forms, were worshipped all over North India in the first six or seven centuries of the Christian era.

LISTS OF GODDESSES

Perhaps one of the most obvious indications of a widespread belief in or worship of goddesses is to be obtained from the fact that, apart from numerous individual names separately introduced in independent contexts, groups or clusters of names of goddesses of various types are frequently met with in the literature of our period. Such clusters are, of course, of the most varied types. While some include but only a few goddesses, others contain scores of names and take the form of long lists, especially in some later sources where, they are even counted. The reason for clustering the goddesses together can be easily guessed in the case of smaller groups in which the names tend to suggest a similar nature or, less frequently, when the goddesses so named have a common mythological framework to bring them together. But a definite connecting link is much less in evidence in the cases of larger groups where, even presuming that the majority of the goddesses named have some semblance of reality, the grouping is purely mechanical or theoretical. In such cases, their sex provides the sole justification for their grouping. Some other types of evidence which we would prefer to include along with the above are not merely summarily introduced groups, but rather deliberate mythical accounts of goddesses or female beings and their spheres of activity, or actual prescriptions for their adoration, propitiation or exorcism. In these cases, while the figures included are treated individually, their grouping is impressive and significant. An additional gain from the analysis of all this evidence together is the realization that, in the context of the popular goddesses, the dividing line between the divine and demoniacal is truly thin, for not only are demonesses often enumerated along with goddesses, but also they often have their own special rites of adoration or pacification.

ABSTRACT GODDESSES

A very frequently appearing group of half a dozen to a dozen or more feminine beings consists of apparent abstractions of mental or moral traits or various elements of auspiciousness and prosperity. Generally bearing names such as Hrī, Śrī, Kīrti, Dhṛti, Smṛti, Bhūti, Puṣṭi, Kriyā, Buddhi, Lajjā, Mati, Āśā, Śraddhā, Aditi, Anumati, Siddhi, Śānti, *etc.*, they appear in many different contexts, in myths and eulogies as embellishments, in benedictions and sometimes also in rites.[2] Some of them apparently have a history going back to Vedic times, but many look like *ad hoc* creations of a later age. Though tenuous, the grouping of these figures has a certain unity, and their endurance in literature is remarkable. Equally remarkable is the fact that this otherwise very amorphous group includes a popular goddess like Śrī-Lakṣmī. It is mostly a selection from this group which appears in the well known creation legends in the epics and the *Purāṇas* as the wives of Dharma and sometimes of other seers.[3] In fact these creation legends themselves are excellent illustrations for names of a large number of divine females. The key element of these legends is formed by the fifty or sixty so-called daughters of Dakṣa, who, in different groups, married to different personages, become the mothers of gods, demons, men and animals. The accounts are already confused in the epics, and the *Purāṇas* produce their own variations within the general framework.[4] It would be tedious to name them and we refer the reader to the brief sketch provided by Hopkins on the basis of the epic materials.[5] But the important point is that a large number of female beings are meticulously named, and in their ranks are included such well known mythical figures of divine or demoniacal nature as Aditi, Diti, Danu, Vinatā, Kadrū, Śrī-Lakṣmī, Rati, Nirṛti, *etc.*

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[2] *Rāmāyaṇa*, III. 49. 16 enumerates several of these figures in the context of Rāvaṇa asking Sītā if she was a divine being. *Mbh.*, II. 7.4-5 names about half a dozen of them as present with Śacī in Indra's assembly, and *ibid.*, IX. 45.57 portrays some of them as marching in front of Skanda's army. They often appear in eulogies of gods and goddesses. Thus the names of many of these abstract figures are given to Śrī-Lakṣmī in *Viṣ. P.*, I.9.119; to Mahādevī in her apocryphal *stutis* in (*Ref. Contd.*)

FEROCIOUS GODDESSES : MĀTṚS, BĀLA-GRAHĀS, Etc.

The enumeration of popular group divinities called Mātṛs provides another occasion for long lists of goddesses. Though they are generally counted as a group of seven or eight—and occasionally sixteen—in their popular brahmanized form, their group nature and essentially unbrahmanical, popular origin has encouraged the production of lists in each of which the names of the so-called "Mothers" number about two hundred. One such list is found in the myth of the birth of Skanda-Kārttikeya in the *Mahābhārata*[6] and an equally large one is found both in the *Matsya*[7] and the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*.[8] In another chapter, we have subjected these lists to a detailed analysis in so far as they are relevant to the concept and cult of the Mātṛs,[9] but it may

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Mbh., Kinjawadekar's edn., IV.6.22; VI.23.15-6 (see also *Mbh.*, Cr. edn., Vol. 5, p. 301, App. I, no. 4 D, 1.44, and *ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 710, App. I, no. 1, 11.29-32), and in her several *stutis* in the *Devīmāhātmya*; see *Mār. P.*, 78.60; 81.5; 82.22ff.; 88.21 (*ibid.*, tr. Pargiter, pp. 471, 482-3, 491ff. and 515). *Vāy. P.*, 55.43 suggests their origin from Śiva. *Nāṭya-śāstra*, III. 86-7 names them in a benediction, and *ibid.*, III. 5, 24 and 52 prescribe their worship in the various rites of consecration of the playhouse. Perhaps it was usual to insert names of some of these goddesses in the rites of worship of the one or the other of the more prominent goddesses; see *Mat. P.*, 69. 25-6; 81.16; *etc.* For the place of these figures in the myths of creation, see below. It may be noted that Śrī and Lakṣmī are often named separately in this group, and Sarasvatī is also occasionally included.

[3] This appears recurrently in the Manvantara sections of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*; see *Mbh.*, I. 60.13-4; Dikshitar, *The Purāṇa Index*, II, p. 159, s.v. *Dharma* (III). The number and names of these wives of Dharma are quite variable.

[4] See *e.g.*, *Viṣ. P.*, I.7.

[5] Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 189 ff. and 198 ff.

[6] *Mbh.*, IX. 45. 1-28.

[7] *Mat. P.*, 179.9 ff.

[8] *Viṣ. Dh. P.*, I. 226.7 ff.

[9] See below, Ch. III. For the names of the "Mothers" in the lists in the epic and the *Matsya Purāṇa*, see the Appendix to the chapter on the Mātṛs.

be noted here that while the lists in the two *Purāṇas* are substantially the same and must eventually be traceable to one source, the one in the *Mahābhārata*, which is also probably the earlier, is quite different, and thus, even allowing for the few common names and some internal repetitions, the two lists together produce more than 350 names of goddesses. Of these names, while some are familiar divine and demoniacal figures, of Vedic and non-Vedic origin, a large number may be purely *ad hoc* creations. The important thing from our point of view, however, is the very existence of such lists.

The "Mothers" appear in the epic and Purāṇic myths in the role of demoniacal and blood-thirsty fighters, and sometimes as ogresses and afflicters of human beings in infancy and childhood. The names and characteristics of some other types of equally fearsome beings are also given in various texts of classical Sanskrit literature. The accounts of them are usually grouped, although they do not occur in large lists like that of the Mātṛs. Unlike the "Mothers", these beings are explicitly termed evil and classed as demonesses. But it appears that they too were sometimes propitiated; they may be said to have had some kind of a cult and, therefore, have a certain claim to be classed as popular goddesses.

We may first note that, in its legends of creation, the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* speaks of a demon called Duḥsaha, an offspring of Mṛtyu by Alakṣmī, who is thoroughly misshapen and ugly and ever ready to afflict and devour human beings. The text refers to his haunts, and to the kinds of men and women who are possessed by him, but also adds that he can be appeased, and specifically refers to plenteous *bali* offerings to him with the utterance of his name at the close of the *Vaiśvadeva* ceremony.[10] Later, it speaks of the eight sons and eight daughters of Duḥsaha, all very terrible and evil, naming the daughters as Niyojikā, Virodhinī, Svayaṁ-hāra-karī, Bhrāmaṇī, Ṛtu-hārikā, Smṛti-harā, Vīja-harā and Vidveṣaṇī, and it further mentions the equally evil progeny of these sixteen. The evil propensities and activities of each of these beings are described, often in detail, and since they are conceived of as purely demoniacal beings, a prophylactic rite is also suggested in several cases.[11] An interesting instance is of Jāta-hāriṇī, said to be one of the three daughters of Ṛtu-hāriṇī.[12] She is imagined as the agent who causes miscarriage in pregnant women and feeds on the newly born children, and naturally, therefore, a warning is sounded to guard against her in the lying-in chamber. But, as will be apparent from the conspicuous mention of her name in certain medical texts to be noticed below, it would be unfair to think of Jāta-hāriṇī as a mere demoness. In fact there are indications that she was regularly worshipped in the rites relating to birth, and was in the nature of a popular goddess.[13]

Several feminine beings of predominantly malevolent nature who afflicted children in various ways are also listed as Bāla-grahās led by Skanda in the *Suśruta Saṁhitā*.[14]

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[10] *Mār. P.*, 47.33ff. (tr. Pargiter, pp. 250 ff.). The v. 62 refers to *bali* offerings to Duḥsaha.

[11] *Ibid.*, ch. 48 (tr. Pargiter, pp. 257 ff.).

[12] *Ibid.*, 48. 103-4, 107-9 (tr. Pargiter, p. 266). Jāta-hāriṇī is here also called *Piśitāśanā*, *i.e.*, one who feeds on flesh.

[13] See below.

[14] *Suśruta Saṁhitā*, *Uttara Tantra*, chs. 27-35.

They are named as Śakunī, Revatī, Pūtanā, Andha-pūtanā, Śīta-pūtanā and Mukha-maṇḍikā. But in the rites aiming at the removal of their evil influences they are praised and adored like goddesses, and offerings are prescribed to propitiate them. The prayers are cast in traditional fashion and, though extremely brief, try to describe the form of the goddess concerned and occasionally establish interesting equations while giving the various names of the goddess. Thus, Revatī is also called Lambā, Karālā, Vinatā, Bahuputrikā and Śuṣkanāmā.[15]

Though classed as a Bāla-grahā, Revatī nevertheless must be imagined as a very popular goddess. The *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*, another medical text, also refers to Revatī as a Bāla-grahā,[16] but attaches great importance to her and entitles a whole section dealing with uncanny afflictions as *Revatīkalpāddhyāya.*[17] In this section, Revatī appears not as an afflicter of human beings but, on the contrary, as a goddess who, on the instructions of Skanda-Kārttikeya, protects them against afflictions by other evil beings. She is said to be of many forms, *Bahu-rūpā*, but her principal form is Jāta-hariṇī, and, in fact, the two names, Revatī and Jāta-hāriṇī, are indiscriminately used throughout this section of the text to denote the same goddess. It is also said that Revatī—Jāta-hāriṇī is of three main types, divine, human and pertaining to the animal world, and pervades the three worlds in her various forms. She is *sarva-loka-bhayaṁkarī* and revered even by the gods for the growth and long life of progeny.[18] Dozens of forms of Jāta-hāriṇī are enumerated in this context, and they are classified according to various geographical regions and tribes covering practically the whole of India, and also according to various professional groups like blacksmiths, carvers, carpenters, potters, cobblers, garland-makers, tailors, washermen, cowherds, *etc.*[19]

Even in the section on the Bāla-grahās, Revatī is considered as surpassing all the other Grahas in power and influence and prescriptions are given for her worship and daily recitation of her name to cure children of any afflictions and for freedom from fear.[20] Here again, she is said to be of many names and forms, and twenty of her names are actually enumerated; they include Vāruṇī, Brāhmī, Kumārī, Bahuputrikā, Ṣaṣṭhī, *etc.* She is once specifically called Ṣaṣṭhī and, in that form, is conceived of as the sister of Skanda-Kārttikeya; it is also prescribed that the six-faced goddess, Ṣaṇmukhī-ṣaṣṭhī, should be particularly worshipped on the sixth day of the delivery of a child.

The female Grahas afflicting infancy and childhood are also prominently referred to in the *Mahābhārata*, but they are there confused with the *Mātṛ-gaṇāḥ*, and it is said

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15. *Ibid.*, 31. 10-1.
16. *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*, pp. 90, 98 ff.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 187 ff.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 194:
Trividhaiva jātahāriṇī procyate lokabhedataḥ daivī mānuṣī tiraścīneti. Tasmāttrayo lokā bhagavatyā revatyā bahurūpayā vyāptāḥ. Ityataśca sarva-lokabhayaṁkarī revatī paṭhyate. Tāṁ devā a(ma)nyanta, tata eṣāṁ prajāḥ prāvṛdhyanta, na eṣāṁ prajā vicchedamagamat. ...
19. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 98 ff.

that these beings should be propitiated to ward off their evil influences.[21] Not only the descriptions but often also the names of several female beings given there agree with those of the medical texts. Thus we have also in the epic a Śakunī-graha called Vinatā,[22] Pūtanā identified as Rākṣasi[23] and Śita-pūtanā called Piśāci,[24] Revatī strangely identical with Aditi,[25] and Mukha-maṇḍikā called Diti.[26] In addition, there are Surabhi, Saramā, the "Mother of the Trees" (*pādapānāṁ ca yā mātā*), the "Mother of the Gandharvas" and the "Mother of the Apsarases", the daughter of the divinity of the red sea (*lohitasyodadheḥ kanyā*) said to have served as nurse to Skanda and worshipped as Lohitāyani in Kadamba trees, and Āryā who is said to be the mother of all children and especially worshipped for their welfare.[27] This latter is described as having the same status among females as Rudra has among the males, and there are some other indications that she may have been a very popular goddess in her own right.[28]

In this description in the *Mahābhārata*, all the female beings, including Revatī, are conceived of as the mothers of Skanda.[29] In popular epic and Purāṇic legends, Revatī is generally imagined as the wife of Balarāma,[30] and not only the later iconographic texts describe the icons of Revatī by the side of her husband,[31] but also some sculptures are identified as representing the couple.[32] In the *Gaūḍavaho* of Vākpati, Revatī appears as the attendant of the fierce Vindhyavāsinī goddess.[33] However, the tradition of Revatī as the patron goddess of children seems to have been very strong in the popular mind. Revatī is the name of a Nakṣatra both in Vedic and post-Vedic literature,[34] and it is possible that this provided the starting point of the conception of an ogress and disease demoness of that name who eventually grew to sufficient prominence to be accepted as a popular goddess. This development is quite natural and probably provides another instance of the malevolent nature of astrological cults.[35] Considering that many astral figures are already mixed up in the myths of Skanda-Kārttikeya in the *Mahābhārata*,[36] the association of this god with Revatī is also quite natural. In any case, as we have seen, there is a strong tradition of the association of Skanda with disease demons. Revatī's relationship with Balarāma, however, may be regarded as a relatively later development, perhaps effected on the basis of the very popular character of the latter as addicted to drinking and as a patron deity of agriculture.[37]

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[21] *Mbh.*, III. 219. 26 ff. ; see also below, Ch. III. According to V.S. Agrawala, the section on the Bāla-grahas of Skanda was probably added during the Kusāṇa period; see his *Bhārata-Sāvitrī*, Vol. I, p. 297.

[22] *Mbh.*, III. 219. 26.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.*, v. 27.

[25] *Ibid.*, v. 28.

[26] *Ibid.*, v. 29.

[27] *Ibid.*, vv. 32-40.

[28] See below. Incidentally, it may be noted that Jaina texts describe an *Ajjā-maha* (*Āryā-maha*) (see Jain, *Life in Ancient India as depicted in Jaina Canon*, p. 215, 224-5), and Āryā is also one of the several names of the Great Goddess; see *Mbh.*, Cr. edn., Vol. 7, App.I, no.1, p. 710, 1.7; *Hv.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., II. 3.1, 3.

[29] A verse in the vulgate editions of the epic in which Skanda-Kārttikeya is called *Revatī-suta* has been rejected by the Cr. edn. as a later interpolation; see *Mbh.*, Cr.edn., Vol. 4, p. 1076, App. I, no. 22, 1.13.

[30] See *Mbh.*, I. 211. 7; *Viṣ. P.*, IV.1. 65 ff. ; V. 25. 19; *etc.* ; also Hopkins, *EM*, p. 212; Dikshitar, *Purāṇa Index*, III, p. 98. s.v. *Revatī* (II), and p. 72, s.v. *Rāma* (I).

[31] See Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. I, p. 202.

[32] See *ASR*, XX, p. 98, as cited in Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, p. 60 and fn. 5.

[33] See *Gaūḍavaho*, v. 329.

[34] See Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, p. 499 ff. ; Hopkins, *EM*, p. 93; Monier-Williams, *SED*, p. 524, s.v. *Nakṣatra*.

The significance of the name Jāta-hāriṇī is less easy to understand, beyond the obvious one implied in its literal meaning. As we have seen, the *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā* makes this figure, identified with Revatī, a very prominent one. But she too must have been originally an ogress who gradually rose to the status of a popular goddess and protector of children. Agrawala believed that she may be the same as or a form of the well known Hārītī of the Buddhists,[38] but the resemblance extends only to the general character of the two as originally having been "stealers" of children, which is also implied in their names.[39] The identification is also difficult to accept because Jāta-hāriṇī, according to all available evidence, appears to have been only one, if a very prominent one, of a whole class of similar spirits. On the other hand, it is quite possible that she is the same as Jāta-mātṛ-devatā of the *Harṣacarita* with her name euphemistically changed. It is said that, when Harṣa was born, the old nurses danced encircled in a great throng of boys like the incarnate Jāta-mātṛ-devatā surrounded by a troop of dwarfs and deaf people with laughing upturned faces.[40] The commentator Śaṁkara explains her as the cat-faced goddess, surrounded by a crowd of children, who is installed in the lying-in chamber,[41] and a close connection between an evil cat and the

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35. For astrological cults and their malevolent nature, see below, Ch. III. Another instance of a malevolent Nakṣatra who may have been at the root or helped the formation of a popular goddess is Jyeṣṭhā . For the goddess Jyeṣṭhā, see Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. II, pp. 390 ff. ; Banerjea, J.N., "Some Folk Gobdesses of Ancient and Mediaeval India", *IHQ*, XIV, pp. 104 ff. For Jyeṣṭhā as identical with or sharing the characteristics of Alakṣmī and Nirṛti; see Hartmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmī*, pp. 13ff., esp. 15. The author's contention that an earlier goddess Alakṣmī-Jyeṣṭhā was later transformed into Lakṣmī appears to us to be very unconvincing for the simple reason that Lakṣmī preserves nothing of her supposed early malignant character in her later history.
36. See below, Ch. III.
37. Cf. Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
38. Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, p. 54.
39. For Hārītī, see Peri, Noel, "Hārītī, la mère-de-demons", *BEFEO*, XVII, no. 3, 1917, pp. 1 ff. ; also Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, I, pp. 9-10; and II, pp. 5-6 and references cited there.
40. *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 4th *Ucchvāsa*, p. 7: *Vilasadunmukha-vāmanaka-badhira-vṛnda-veṣṭitāḥ sākṣāj-jātamātṛ-devatā iva bahu-bālaka-vyākulā nanṛturvṛddha-dhātryaḥ*. See also *ibid.*, tr. Cowell and Thomas, p. 111.
41. See *ibid.*, ed. Fuehrer, p. 185, and Cowell and Thomas, cited in the fn. above. The commentary by Śaṁkara runs:
    Jātamātṛdevatā mārjārānanā bahuputraparivārā sūtikāgṛhe sthāpyate.
    It appears that this goddess was also identified with Carcikā; see Agrawala, *Harṣacarita—Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 65 and fn. 2.

ogress Jāta-hāriṇī is also clearly established elsewhere in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, though the two are not identified.[42] Relying upon Śaṁkara's explanation of the Jāta-mātṛ-devatā, it is also highly probable that she is the same as Bahu-putrikā or Bahu-putrī who is referred to as a Mātṛ both in the *Mahābhārata*[43] and the *Matsya Purāṇa*,[44] and about whom it is mentioned in the *Kādambarī* that her form adorned the door of the lying-in chamber of the queen Vilāsavatī.[45]

It is also interesting to note that Ṣaṣṭhī, with whom Revatī is identified in the *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*, is imagined as having a black cat as her *vāhana* in her popular cult in modern Bengal.[46] She thus shares some of the characteristics of the ancient Jāta-hāriṇī—Jāta-mātṛ-devatā—Bahu-putrikā, but whether she was originally identical with them, or with Buddhist Hāritī, as has sometimes been supposed, is difficult to say. The comment by Dimock that Ṣaṣṭhī herself, in contradistinction with Manasā who shares many of her characteristics, is never malevolent,[47] may be valid only for her later history in Bengal. Her identification with Revatī—Jāta-hāriṇī and her close association with Skanda make it practically certain that she too had originally a malevolent character. But whether her name originated because she was particularly propitiated on the sixth day of the birth of a child or because she was related to the six-faced Skanda-Kārttikeya is not easy to decide. In any case, her status as an independent goddess seems to be well attested for our period. Agrawala suggested that she may be the same as the six-headed female figure on the reverse of some Yaudheya coins which portray the six-headed Kārttikeya on the obverse.[48] Describing the decorations on the door of the lying-in chamber of queen Vilāsavatī, the *Kādambarī* refers to the painting or installation of the figure of Ṣaṣṭhī on the one side and that of Kārttikeya on the other.[49]

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42. *Mār. P.*, 73.6 ff. (tr. Pargiter, pp. 450-1).
43. *Mbh.*, IX. 45.3.
44. *Mat. P.*, 179.19.
45. *Kādāmbarī*, ed. Parab, p. 159: *Āsakta-bahuputrikālaṁkṛtena. . . dvāreṇa. . .* ; also Agrawala, *Kādambarī-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 77. On Bahuputrikā, see alse Shah, U.P., "Yakṣa Worship in Early Jaina Literature", *JOI*, III, 1953-54, pp. 61-2.
46. See Dimock, Jr., Edward C., "Manasā, Goddess of Snakes: The Ṣaṣṭhī Myth", in Kitagawa and Long (ed.), *Myths and Symbols, etc.*, p. 220.
47. *Ibid*; cf. similar comments by Bhattacharya who compares the benevolent Ṣaṣṭhī with a malevolent modern goddess called "Jātāpahāriṇī" and the Buddhist Hārītī; see Bhattacharya, Asutosh, "The Cult of Ṣaṣṭhī in Bengal", *Man in India*, XXVIII, 1948, pp. 152-3.
48. Agrawala, V.S., "Goddess Shashṭhī on the Yaudheya Coins", *JNSI*, V, 1943, pp. 29-32. Agrawala also pointed out to an inscription from Supia (near Rewa, modern M.P.) of the time of Skandagupta which refers to the installation and worship of the goddess Ṣaṣṭhī; see the *Prācīna Bhāratīya Loka-dharma*, p. 61 (Eng. version, p. 94). But that is uncertain. Sircar reads the relevant word as *bala-yaṣṭi*; see Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, I, p. 318: "Supia Stone Pillar Inscription, *etc.*", ll. 14-5 and fn. 6. Incidentally, the Harigaon inscription of Aṁśuvarman, from Nepal, refers to a Ṣaṣṭhī-devakula and some grant made to it; see Regmi, *Some Aspects of Nepali Culture during the Licchavi Period* (*c.* A.D. *464-800*), (B.H.U. Ph.D. Thesis 1970), pp. 339-40; also Gnoli, *Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Characters*, p. 48.
49. *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, p. 160:
Hāridra-drāva-vicchuraṇa-piñjaritāmbara-dhāriṇīṁ
bhagavatīṁ ṣaṣṭhīṁ devīṁ kurvatā . . . .

A *Ṣaṣṭhī-kalpa* is described in the *Mānava-gṛhya-sūtra*[50] and there are also indications that this goddess was sometimes associated with Śrī-lakṣmī.[51]

The propitiatory rites to evil beings who afflicted human life in pregnancy and infancy, as suggested in the epic, Purāṇic and medical texts, are apparently connected with the rites to drive away evil demons from a newly born child as prescribed in the *Gṛhya-sūtras*. Thus, the *Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra* prescribes that mustard seeds with rice chaff should be thrown into the fire established near the door of the confinement room at morning and evening twilight until the mother gets up from the child-bed, with the recitation of the mantras: "May Śaṇḍa, Marka, Upavīra, Śauṇḍikeya, Ulūkhala, Malimluca, Droṇāsa, Cyavana vanish hence. Svāhā! May Ālikhat, Animiṣa, Kiṁvadanta, Upaśruti, Haryakṣa, Kumbhin, Śatru, Pātrapāṇi, Nṛmaṇi, Hantrīmukha, Sarṣapāruṇa, Cyavana vanish hence. Svāhā!"[52] In the same continuation, the text prescribes the rite to drive away a special disease-bringing demon called Kumāra and conceived of in the form of a dog.[53] The latter rite is also described with some elaboration in the *Hiraṇyakeśin Gṛhya-sūtra*.[54] In one place, the she-dog Saramā is said to be the mother of Kumāra,[55] apparently the same as her namesake in the Ṛg-vedic hymns;[56] in another place, his mother is Dulā,[57] which appears in the later Vedic texts as the name of one of the Kṛttikās.[58] Apparently the evil beings imagined in these rites are generally masculine and are comparable to similar beings in *AV*, VIII. 6. But the most interesting information contained in the passage is the existence of the disease demon called Kumāra. It may also be added that Upaśruti mentioned in *Pār. GS.*, I.16.23 seems to have gradually developed into a goddess who uttered oracles. In the *Mahābhārata*, she helps Indrāṇī to discover the hidden Indra,[59] and, in its description of the worship of various deities by Vilāsavatī to obtain a son, the *Kādambarī* speaks of the queen's attendants visiting Upaśruti for prophecies.[60] The *Baudhāyana Gṛhya-pariśiṣṭa-sūtra* even describes an *Upaśruti-kalpa*, which may be a brahmanized version of some popular rite of the goddess.[61]

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50. Mān. GS., II. 13 (tr. Dresden, pp. 154-7; also additional notes on p. 197).
51. See Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, pp. 218-9; also Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, pp 99-100. On Ṣaṣṭhī, see also *Brahma-vaivarata Purāṇa*, II (Prakṛti-khaṇḍa), ch. 43; Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, pp. 434-5; Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, pp. 58 ff.
52. *Pār. GS.*, I. 16.23 (*SBE*, XXIX, p. 296). In the same text, in the prescriptions for *bali* offerings which is made a part of *Darśa-pūrṇamāsa*, the wife is supposed to offer the *bali* outside the house with various utterances including: "They who allure my offspring, dwelling in the village or in the forest, to them be adoration; I offer a *bali* to them. Be welfare to me! May they give me offspring."; *ibid.*, I. 12.4 (*SBE*, XXIX, pp. 290-1).
53. *Ibid.*, I.16.24 (*SBE*, XXIX, pp. 296-7).
54. *HGS*, II.2.7 (*SBE*, XXX, pp. 219-20).
55. *Pār. GS.*, I.16.24 (*SBE*, XXIX, p. 297).
56. See Macdonell, *VM*, p. 151.
57. *HGS.*, II. 2. 7. 2 (*SBE*, XXX, p. 220).
58. See *TS*, IV. 4. 5;*TB*, III. 1.4.1.
59. *Mbh.*, V. 13. 24-5; 14. 1-4.
60. *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, p. 146; also Agrawala, *Kādambarī-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 71.
61. See Harting, *Selections from the Baudhāyana-Gṛhya-pariśiṣṭa-sūtra*, pp. 15-6; also Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, pp. 809 ff.

It is not our intention to collect detailed evidence for the popular cults of the individual figures named above. Revatī, Jāta-hāriṇī, Ṣaṣṭhī, Upaśruti, *etc.*, appear to be only representatives of a whole class of beings who were originally demonesses, mainly connected with pregnancy, birth, infantile mortality and disease, but who gradually developed their own propitiatory rites and some of whom became important enough to be accepted in the brahmanical pantheon. As pointed out by Meyer, superstition of this kind is spread throughout the world.[62] The important thing to note is that these primitive ideas seem to have provided a prolific source of popular religion in ancient India, and ancient witches and ogresses have been gradually converted into goddesses. Also, the suspicion that there must have been a large number of such evil beings in the beliefs of the ancient Indians—whether or not they always bore names as reported of them in the texts cited above—prevents any easy derivation of the one from the other.

LISTS OF GODDESSES IN BUDDHIST AND JAINA LITERATURE

We may note some other instances where names of feminine beings or goddesses are deliberately collected or indirectly introduced. In the modified and expanded version of the Pali *Āṭānāṭiya Suttanta*,[63] as it appears in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarika*,[64] three Bodhisattvas and Vaiśravaṇa give talismanic words for guard, defence and protection of the faithful, each of which is a formula, ending in *svāhā*, in which from six to several dozen words are used which, as Kern suggested, are apparently feminine words in the vocative.[65] The underlying principle of these formulae, therefore, appears to be an invocation to various feminine beings for protection. Kern imagined the several names to be "epithets of the Great Mother, Nature or Earth, differently called Aditi, Prajñā, Māyā, Bhavānī, Durgā", and tried to demonstrate that most of the names of the largest of these *mantras* may be explained as synonymous with *prajñā*, nature and earth. In another of these formulae, which begins with the words *Jvāle mahā-jvāle ukke*—the latter probably the Prakrit form of the Sanskrit *ulke*— Kern found the terms as obviously names of the "flame", mythologically the wife of Agni, and noting that as Agni may be identified with Śiva, the feminine words here too might be regarded as epithets of Durgā.[66] In still another *mantra*, he argued, the names like Gaurī, Caṇḍālikā and Mātaṅgī are known from elsewhere as epithets of Durgā, and others like Pukkasī and Vṛṣalī denote the same as Caṇḍālī and mātaṅgī.[67] Except for a few obvious names like Gaurī and Gandhārī, perhaps also Caṇḍālī and Mātaṅgī, most of the names in these *mantras* appear to be meaningless words, especially as several of them are juxtaposed to rhyme with each other. But from the form in which the words are couched, there seems no reason to doubt that they are supposed to be addressed to various feminine beings for protection.

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[62] Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, p. 392.

[63] *Dīgha Nikāya*, XXXII (ed. Carpenter, Vol. III, PTS edn. . pp. 194 ff).

[64] *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*, ed. Vaidya, ch. XXI, pp. 233 ff.

[65] *Ibid.*, tr. Kern, *SBE*, XXI, p. 371, fn. 3.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 372 and fn. 1.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 373 and fn. 2.

In the sequel of the narrative in the above Buddhist text, several feminine beings are actually introduced.[68] They are named Lambā, Vilambā (or Pralambā), Kūṭadantī, Puṣpadantī, Makuṭadantī, Keśinī, Acalā, Mālādhārī, Kuntī, Sarva-sattvoja-hārī, and Hārīti, and are said to have come to Buddha with their own children and families. Although each is distinctly called a Rākṣasī, together they give to Buddha the magical charm whose utterance is supposed to protect the faithful against any calamity. In its structure, their *mantra* follows the standard form of the others', but even more than the others, it is a collection of meaningless words arranged in clusters of various rhymes. It is interesting to note that Kuntī, not Hārītī, is portrayed as the leader and spokesman of the group of giantesses.

The *Dhāraṇī-mantra-padāni* of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* may be regarded as very tenuous evidence of belief in or cult of popular goddesses,[69] but Buddhist Sanskrit literature has also other and more reliable indications to that effect. The names of thirty-two goddesses, divided into four groups of eight each and portrayed as guardian deities of the four cardinal points, are given in the *Lalita-vistara* in the context of utterance of blessings by the Buddha to the two merchants, Trapusa and Bhallika.[70] They are called Deva-kumārikās, and the wish is expressed that they grant health and happiness.[71] Some of the names are apparently those of the Apsarases in the epic-Purāṇic tradition,[72] while a large number of others are of the type of Hrī, Śrī, Āśā, Śraddhā, *etc.*[73] The names of Ilā and Pṛthvī[74] may also be regarded as familiar but several are not so easily intelligible. These are the names like Siddhārthā, Su-utthitā, Su-prathamā, Su-prabuddhā, Sukhāvahā, *etc.*, and some others beginning with Nanda.[75] Jayantī and Vijayantī[76] may or may not have any relationship with Jayā and Vijayā, which are seen elsewhere as names of the Great Goddess[77] as also of her two principal

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68. *Ibid.*, ed. Vaidya, ch. XXI, pp. 234-5; tr. Kern, *SBE*, XXI, pp. 373 ff.
69. Similar *mantras* containing names of feminine beings in the vocative may also be collected from the Hindu *Tantras*, but they are generally later than the Buddhist evidence cited here. It may be noted, however, that the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya also gives similar formulae in its section entitled *aupaniṣadika*. Thus *Arthaśāstra*, ed. Kangle, 14. 3. 26 has:
Alite valite manave svāhā.
Ibid., 14. 3. 36 contains:
Svāhā. Amile kimile vayucāre prayoge phakke vayuhve vihāle dantakaṭake svāhā.
See also *Ibid.*, tr. Kangle, pp. 585-586 and note on 14.3.36.
70. *Lalita-vistara*, ed. Vaidya, ch. XXIV, esp. pp. 282 ff.
71. *Ibid.*, vv. 117-8, 126-7, 135-6, and 144-5, in each case giving the benediction:
Tā pi va adhipālentu ārogyena śivena ca.
72. *Ibid.*, v. 135. The following verse names such Deva-kumārikās as Ekādaśā, Navamikā, Śītā, Kṛṣṇā and Draupadī.
73. *Ibid.*, v. 145; cf. also v. 126.
74. *Ibid.*, v. 144. Padmāvatī named in this verse may have nothing to do with Śrī-Lakṣmī, because a Śirī is named in v. 145, and a Śriyā-matī in v. 126. Apropos of Surā-devī, see references to a goddess Madirā in *Arthaśāstra*, ed. Kangle, 2. 4. 17, and *Viṣ. P.*, V. 25. 1-7.
75. *Lalita-vistara*, ed. Vaidya, ch. XXIV, pp. 282 ff., vv. 117, 127.
76. *Ibid.*, v. 117.
77. See *e.g.*, *Mbh.*, Cr. edn., Vol. 7, App. I, no. 1, p. 710, 1.11.

maids.[78] The name Aparājitā may only connote a Yakṣī,[79] but it is also an epithet of Mahā-devī and it is under this name that the *Yaśastilaka* once describes her cult.[80] It may be added that the 32 Deva-kumārikās noted above are in addition to the 28 Nakṣatras who also are all named and assigned in four groups of seven each to the four directions, with the expression of a similar wish that they keep watch abroad as well as at home.[81] An almost exactly similar list of "divine maidens" is also found in the *Mahāvastu* in the description of the same event,[82] and it appears that this mode of classifying popular goddesses according to the directions was also popular in the Jaina and brahmanical traditions.[83]

The recently published Jaina text *Aṅgavijjā*, dealing with prognostications and ascribed roughly to the fourth century A.D.,[84] names in at least three places separately a number of popular deities including many goddesses or types of goddesses. In the first place,[85] introducing the names as belonging to the wives and daughters of the Asuras, Nāgas, Gandharvas, Rākṣasas, Yakṣas and Kinnaras, or to the Vanaspatīs, Diśās or directions, and the astral figures, it refers to nearly forty goddesses which include several names of the type Hrī, Śrī, Kīrti, Dhṛti, Smṛti, *etc.*, easily recognizable names of Apsarases like Alaṁbuṣā, Miśrakeśī, Menakā, Rambhā, Tilottamā, Urvaśī, *etc.*, general names like Devī, Bhagavatī, and some well known names like Ilā and Sitā, besides class-names such as Deva-kanyā, Asura-kanyā, *etc.* But some of the names in their Prakrit forms are curious and hardly render intelligible Sanskrit equivalents. Such are Apalā, Aṇāditā, Airāṇi and Sālimāliṇi, which, being sandwiched in between the names of recognizable Apsarases, could be taken to represent deities belonging to the same class, but about whom it has been suspected that they might perhaps refer to foreign goddesses Pallas Athene, Anāhitā, Irene and Selene respectively.[86]

Long lists of popular deities appear in two other places in the same text, in the chapters entitled *Devatā-vijayajjhāo* and *Cintitajjhāo*.[87] The goddesses enumerated here are roughly classifiable into such figures as Hrī, Śrī, Buddhi, Medhā, Kirti, *etc.*; into those whose names signify classes or types rather than individual deities, such as Yakṣiṇī, Nāginī, Kinnarī, Apasarā, Nakṣatra, Vidyādharī, Rākṣasī, Piśacī, as also Asura-kanyā, Gandharva-kanyā, Kiṁpuruṣa-kanyā, Bhūta-kanyā, Vāta-kanyā, *etc.*; and those which may be typically Jaina creations or at least bear typically Jaina names, such as Dvīpa-kumārī, Diśā-kumārī, Giri-kumārī and Samudra-kumārī. There is a Latā-devatā and also a Vanaspati-kanyā. The so-called Devatās of Samudra, Nadī, Kūpa, Taḍāga, "Pallala" (?) and Diśā are also likely to be all female beings, as are probably several others like the Kula-devatā, Vāstu-devatā (Prakrit Vatthu-devatā), Nagara-devatā, Varca-devatā and Śmaśāna-devatā.[88] There is a Sarva-vidyā-devatā besides a Deva-vidyā. Some well known female beings are also included in the two places, such as Śrī. Ekānaṁśā, Pṛthivī, Rātri and Sarasvatī, and the same must be said of some others like Āryā and Śakunī, who appear elsewhere as afflicters of children, and perhaps also of "Māuyā" (Mātṛkā ?) who may be a spirit of similar type. Some peculiar or obscure names are Alaṇā, Seṇāvatī, Navamikā and Surā, the latter two of which also appear in the *Lalita-vistara*. Of the few obscure names elsewhere in the text to which a reference has been made and in which suggestions of foreign goddesses have been suspected, only Airāṇī appears in these two lists.

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[78] See Quackenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra*, pp. 245-6.

[79] See Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, pp. 124 ff. for the Yakṣa connotations of the word *Aparājita*.

[80] See Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture*, pp. 398 ff. The manuscripts of some *stotras* claiming to belong to the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa* are entitled *Aparājitā-stotra*; see Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, I, p. 157, fn. 122 (x).

[81] *Lalita-vistara*, ed. Vaidya, ch. XXIV, pp. 282 ff. , vv. 112-4, 121-3, 130-2, 139-41.

[82] See *Mahāvastu*, tr. Jones, Vol. III, pp. 293 ff.

[83] See Scheftelowitz, I., "Śrīsūkta", *ZDMG*, 75, 1921, p. 42, citing *Trailokya-dīpikā-nāma-saṁgrahaṇī*. See also Alsdorf, L., "Further Contributions to the History of Jaina Cosmography and Mythology", *New Indian Antiquary*, IX, Nos. 4-6, April-June 1947, pp. 105 ff. A comparative study of the goddess-lists in the *Mahāvastu*, *Lalitavistara* and the *Vinaya* of the Mahāsaṁghikas has been made by Bareau, A., in "Constellations et divinités protectrices des marchands dans le bouddhisme ancien", *Journal Asiatique*, 1954, pp. 303-309 (inf. supplied by Prof. J.W. de Jong). For brahmanical evidence, see *Mbh.*, 13.110.74-75, which refers to 32 *devakumārīs*.

[84] See *Aṅgavijjā*, Intro. by Moti Chandra, pp. 36, 55; also Agrawala, V.S., "Coin-names in the *Aṅgavijjā*", in *ibid.*, p. 94.

[85] *Aṅgavijjā*, p. 69; also *ibid.*, Intro. by Moti Chandra, p. 42, and Intro. by Agrawala, V.S., pp. 61-2.

[86] See the Introductions by Moti Chandra and Agrawala, cited in the fn. above.

[87] *Aṅgavijjā*, pp. 204 ff., 223-4; also *ibid.*, Intro. by Moti Chandra, pp. 53, 54, and Intro. by Agrawala, pp. 78, 83.

In its chapters *Devatā-vijayajjhāo* and *Cintitajjhāo*, the *Aṅgavijjā* introduces the names of the deities, both gods and goddesses, in a rather haphazard manner, without an order of precedence or hint at relative popularity. But it does contain a statement suggesting their natural classification into hierarchically arranged types such as *uttama*, *madhyama* and *avara*. It also adds significantly that while some of the deities are Aryan, the others are Mleccha.[89]

GODDESS LISTS IN PURĀṆIC LITERATURE

In at least two places, the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa* also collects together the names of several goddesses, although the intention is not just to produce bare lists but rather to prescribe rites. A modest attempt of this kind, more symbolical than real or factual in effect, is a very short chapter giving the names of the deities to be particularly worshipped by women.[90] It first refers to Śrī and then includes Aśokikā, constellations like the Kṛttikās and Rohiṇī, and also Gaurī and Indrāṇī. Since the deities included are mostly female, and the only clearly male deities are Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, Kāmadeva and Kārttika, perhaps the Chhando-devatā and Vāstu-devatā are also to be understood as goddesses, the latter in the sense of Gṛha-devatā or Gṛha-devī. In any case, the general impression created by the prescriptions is that the goddesses were particularly the deities of women.[91] In another place, in answer to the question as to who are the deities and at what times they are to be worshipped, the same text collects together more than one hundred names, nearly half of whom are names of goddesses.[92] Well known figures like Śrī, Pṛthivī, Umā, Menā, Bhadrakāli, Kātyāyanī, Śacī, Ekānaṁśā, *etc.*, find places in the list. We have also Nidrā, Svāhā, Svadhā, Ṛddhi, Anusūyā, Devasenā; Gaurī as Varuṇānī, Yama-patnī Dhūmorṇā and Sūrya-patnī Suvarcalā; and groups such as Deva-patnīs, Deva-mātṛkās and Apsarases. The river goddesses are also included, either in a general way as "one's favourite river-deity" or specially as the seven Gaṅgās and Sarasvatī. But here too, as often elsewhere, the bulk is made up of figures like Rati, Śraddhā, Kīrti, Medhā, Prajñā, Tuṣṭi, Kānti, *etc.* Some names like Su-mahābhāgā and Mṛtyucchāyā may be purely artificial constructions. But whether the names are familiar or otherwise, the important thing to note is that the *Purāṇa*-writer recommends the worship of these deities with all seriousness and presents a rough calendar of their specific rites over the year.

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[88] Cf. Intro. by Moti Chandra, cited in the fn. above.

[89] *Aṅgavijjā*, p. 206 :
Uttamesu uttamāṇi, majjhimehiṁ mijjhimāṇi, paccavarehiṁ paccavarāni. Āriyopaladdhīhiṁ āriyadevatāṇi, milakkhūpaladdhīhiṁ milakkhadevatāṇi.

[90] *Viṣ. Dh. P.*, II. 35.

[91] This is also the impression created by the long description of the *devatārādhana* of Vilāsavatī to obtain an offspring in the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa; see *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, pp. 143-6.

The various eulogies of the Goddess Mahā-devī, *e.g.*, the apocryphal *stutis* addressed to Durgā or Āryā in the *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṁśa*, the praise of the Goddess in the *Devī-Māhātmya*, the *Caṇḍī-śataka* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the *stuti* of Vindhyavāsinī-devī in *Gaūḍavaho*, *etc.*,[93] are other important sources where a number of goddesses of various types are referred to, usually as names and forms of the Great Goddess. The historians of Indian religions have frequently understood such names and epithets as indicating a historical process of synthesis in which popular goddesses of independent origin merged together to form the concept of the Great Goddess.[94] However, while such comments are legitimate in principle, it is not always possible to single out and enumerate names as referring to independent goddesses. By its very nature, a eulogy, generally speaking, turns out to be an elaborate, figurative description of the form and function of the deity, and many names and epithets may be no more than just what they are supposed to be, words or expressions especially coined to describe the deity and impress her greatness upon listeners. In other words, many names and epithets of the Great Goddess as seen in the eulogies composed in her honour may not have been obtained from independent goddess concepts, but may actually have been coined to serve the purpose of prayer. Perhaps relatively more reliable as sources of real names may be expressions of the type "Thou, O Goddess! art the same as, *etc.*"[95], in which the eulogists seem to identify her with real or imagined figures, although even such expressions occasionally lapse into purely figurative or descriptive epithets. Leaving due margin for these limitations, it must be accepted that several names and epithets of the Great Goddess do suggest independent and diverse elements in her make up, especially when some of the so-called forms of Mahā-devī are well known to have been independent goddess concepts and also because we find special myths to explain the origin of one or the other forms.[96]

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[92] *Viṣ. Dh. P.*, III. 221.

[93] See *Mbh.*, Cr. edn., Vol. 5, App. I, no. 4. pp. 300 ff.; *ibid.*, Vol. 7, App. I, no. 1. pp. 710-1; *Hv.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., II. 3; *Mār. P.*, chs. 78-90, esp. 78. 54-67; 81. 3-27; 82. 7-39; and 88. 2-35 (*ibid.*, tr. Pargiter, pp. 470-1, 482 ff., 489 ff, and 512 ff); Quackenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra*, pp. 267 ff.; *Gauḍavaho*, vv. 285-338.

[94] See Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 143-4; Jacobi, H., "Brahmanism", *ERE*, 2, p. 813; by the same author, "Durgā", *ibid.*, 5, p. 117; *etc.*

[95] Such statements are fairly frequent in the eulogies. See, however, *Mbh.*, Cr. edn., Vol. 5, App., I, no. 4D, p. 301, 11. 44-5; *ibid.*, Vol. 7, App. I, no. 1, p. 710, 11, 21, 29 ff.; *etc.*

Perhaps truer compilations of names of goddesses are some other types of Purāṇic passages, which, though eulogies of the Great Goddess in effect, are actually introduced as mythical narratives of some sort. One such instance may be cited from the *Vāyu Purāṇa.*[97] In this text, in the context of the origin of the gods, *etc.*, we are told of the goddess who formed half of the body of Śaṁkara. She is said to have been born from the mouth of Svayambhū with the right half of her body white and the left black. Asked to divide or multiply herself, she is further said to have been converted into two forms, one white and the other black. These two, however, are to be understood as aspects rather than as personalities, for the narrative continues to enumerate further manifestations, apparently as falling broadly into these two types. The names, of which about fifty are listed, are not easily classifiable. True to the mythical framework provided by the narrative, most of the names are the same as are frequently seen in the eulogies of the Goddess of the type noted above, but the text claims that they are not just name but different forms of the Goddess. Also, instead of introducing the names *en bloc*, it presents them in three separate steps. First, we are told of Svāhā, Svadhā, Mahā-vidyā, Medhā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Aparṇā, Ekaparṇā, Pāṭalā, Umā, Haimavatī, Ṣaṣṭhī, Kalyāṇī, Khyāti, Prajñā and Mahā-bhāgā, who are said to be known in the world as Gaurī. Then, with the statement that now are introduced the names and forms of the Universal Goddess Āryā, the goddesses Prakṛti, Niyatā, Raudrī, Durgā, Bhadrā, Pramāthinī, Kālarātri, Mahā-māyā, Revatī and Bhūta-nāyikā are referred to. In the third section, we are told that the forms of the Goddess that are obtained towards the close of the Dvāpara age are Gautamī, Kauśikī, Āryā, Caṇḍī, Kātyāyanī, Satī, Kumārī, Yādavī, Devī, Varadā, Kṛṣṇapiṅgalā, Bahirdhvajā, Śuladharā, Parama-brahmacāriṇī, Māhendrī, Indrabhaginī, Vṛṣa-kanyā, Eka-vāsinī, Aparājitā, Bahu-bhujā, Pragalbhā, Siṁha-Vāhinī, Ekānaṁśā, Daitya-hanī, Māyā, Mahiṣa-mardinī, Amoghā, Vindhya-nilayā, Vikrāntā and Gaṇa-nāyikā, and the list is closed with the statement that these are the names of the goddess Bhadra-kālī. The narrative contains another closing statement that there are two principal forms of the Great Goddess, Prajñā and Śrī, which pervade the entire universe in thousands of forms.

GODDESSES IN PĪṬHA LEGENDS

Other important instances, though late in date, where a mythical framework is provided for lists of goddesses are the well known legends of the Pīṭhas or sacred places of the Great Goddess. In brief, these legends relate the *Dakṣa-yajña-vidhvaṁsa* episode as seen in the *Mahābhārata*[98] with the addition that, unable to bear the insults heaped on her husband, Satī committed suicide and the enraged Śiva, after killing Dakṣa and destroying his sacrifice, roamed about like a madman with the body of his beloved on his shoulder. To cure him of his infatuation, the gods devised means by which Satī's dead body was cut into pieces and gradually scattered over the earth, so that every place where a part of her body fell became the holy seat of the Great Goddess. We need not go into the origin and development of the above legend. Apparently the idea that every sacred place of the Goddess enshrines a part of her body is the latest addition to the Dakṣa-yajña story, probably sometime in the post-Gupta period.[99] Since the full development of the Pīṭha legends coincides the organisation of the Śākta-Tantric traditions and since it is generally in the Tantric works or works affected by the Tantric tradition that the Pīṭha legends find a conspicuous place, it is possible that they were developed chiefly in Tantric circles.[100] But we find it difficult to agree wholly with Sircar that the idea of Pīṭhas must be regarded as essentially connected with phallic worship or the worship of *liṅga* and *yoni*.[101] It is true that the Tīrthayātrā sections of the *Mahābhārata* refer to such holy places as Yoni or Yoni-dvāra and Stana-kuṇḍa,[102] but when the fully developed legends list the Pīṭhas, they do not invariably associate them with the various limbs of the Goddess, and do not always refer to the infatuation of Śiva or the association of the Goddess in each Pīṭha with a Bhairava form of Śiva.[103] Thus, even if the mythical framework of the developed Pīṭha legends may be purely a product of the Tantric traditions, the compilations of large lists of Pīṭhas seem to be inspired principally by a desire to provide justification for and give unity to the widely prevalent cults of the popular goddesses.

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[96] Cf. *Mār. P.*, 79.8 ff; 82.40 ff; 84.4 ff and 25-6; 85.11 ff and 88.38 ff (*ibid.*, tr. Pargiter, pp. 473-4, 493-4, 499-500, 502-3, and 517-8), where the origins of Caṇḍikā-Ambikā the Great Goddess, and of Kauśikī, Kālī, Cāmuṇḍā, Mātṛs, Vindhya-vāsinī, Raktadantikā, Śatākṣī, Bhīmā and Bhrāmarī are variously explained.

[97] *Vāy. P.*, 9.82-98.

The above appears to us to be a very natural explanation but it may be demonstrated also by an analysis of the legend as seen in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[104] In outline, this version refers to the preparation of the sacrifice by Dakṣa, Satī's anger because her husband was not invited and her announcement that while she would give up her body, Śiva would destroy Dakṣa and his sacrifice. When Satī got ready to consume herself in the fire, Dakṣa realized his mistake and paying homage to his daughter, addressing her as Devi and Jaganmātā, he requested her not to forsake him. The pacified Satī advised him to practise penances, enlightened him about his own future birth and eventually narrated to him the various places and forms in which she would be found and should be worshipped. There is no reference in the narrative to Śiva's infatuation, to his carrying the dead body of his beloved, to the dead body being cut up into pieces, *etc.*

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[98] *Mbh.*, XII. 274, esp. vv. 18 ff.

[99] See Sircar, D.C., "The Śākta Pīṭhas", *JRASB,L,* XIV, no. 1, 1948, pp.5 ff, for the origin and development of the Pīṭha legends and their general lateness; cf. also the comments by Hazra on the lateness of the legend in the *Matsya Purāṇa*; Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records, etc.*, p. 45.

[100] Sircar, *op. cit.*, *JRASB, L*, XIV, no. 1, pp. 6-7, 11 ff.

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[102] *Mbh.*, III. 80. 100; 82. 83, 131.

[103] Cf. the *Matsya Purāṇa* version of the legend (analysed below), which, though dated in the early mediaeval period, is also probably the earliest to give the list of 108 sacred places of the Goddess (see Sircar, *op. cit.*, *JRASB, L*, XIV, no. 1, p. 25).

[104] *Mat. P.*, 13. 10 ff.

The *Matsya Purāṇa* version of the Pīṭha legend may be regarded as an incomplete one inasmuch as it leaves out even such elements of the story as the destruction of Dakṣa and his sacrifice by Śiva. But, from its own point of view, it tries to present a complete picture. The entire narrative is introduced in answer to the questions, why Satī, the daughter of Dakṣa, committed suicide, and what did Dakṣa say to her at the time of her consuming herself in the fire, and fully answers both of them. It even adds a lengthy *Phala-śruti* at the end. It is obvious, therefore, that in the mind of the compiler in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, the Pīṭha legend was mainly illustrative of the universality of the cult of the Supreme Goddess, and any other elements in the story such as the infatuation of Śiva, the cutting up of the dead body of Satī, and every part of her body being enshrined in a holy place where the Goddess was also associated with a form of Śiva were considered non-essential.

The names and holy seats of the goddess as mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa* legend described above need not detain us. Since they have been specifically counted at the end as 108 in number,[105] the list should be regarded as arbitrarily compiled. As a historical document, therefore, it is more imaginary than real.[106] A few names in the list may refer to well known goddesses of independent history or at least to well known forms of the Great Goddess, but a large number are scarcely more than mere names, especially as a few repetitions are also noticed.[107] But the important thing to note here again is that the compiler has produced more than a hundred names and tries to give every impression that they all refer to various forms of the Goddess actually worshipped in various parts of the country.

We have presented in the above pages evidence from various texts in which, under one pretext or another, a large number of names of goddesses are collected together. Hopkins had very early pointed out the existence of lists of deities in the epics, in particular of goddesses, especially abstractions like Memory, Affection, Endurance, Victory, Effort, *etc.*, and generally speaking, adopted the attitude that the mass of such deities are of no importance whatsoever.[108] In his words: "For all they do individually, they might as well be non-existent. Others live in a tale or two". More recently, Agrawala has also pointed to the existence of lists of deities in the epic, Purāṇic, Buddhist, Jaina and other texts, and readily accepted them as evidence of folk cults, ("Loka-dharma")[109]. Apparently neither the cautious scepticism of Hopkins nor the naive affirmation of Agrawala do full justice to the available evidence. Our own analysis of the various lists of goddesses shows that while they do include many names which are easily identifiable as names of known divine or demoniacal figures of independent history, they also contain a very large number of artificial names. This, however, has not deterred the compilers from asserting that they are all names of real goddesses, and often prescribing for them rites of worship or pacification. It is noteworthy that the compilers do not simply refer to the large numbers of goddesses in round figures but actually list their names. At the same time they frequently show that they are but presenting very incomplete lists. This is sometimes deliberately indicated by closing the lists with such expressions as "and others", or "and many others, thousands in number".[110] But the very fact that the lists present very arbitrary numbers of names[111] and occasionally fall back upon names which refer to types rather than individual figures[112] suggests that the names are to be understood more or less as samples. The only conclusion that can be drawn from the existence of such lists, therefore, is that goddesses of various types must have been very widely worshipped during the period of their compilation. These goddesses may or may not have borne the names given to them in the texts, but their cults must have existed. But for the existence of such cults, the lists become worthless and their compilation thoroughly anomalous.[113]

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[105] *Ibid.*, v. 54. The holy places of the Goddess here are not called Pīṭhas, but Tīrthas or Sthānas; see also *ibid.*, v. 25.

[106] Cf. Sircar, *op. cit.*, *JRASB*, *L*, XIV, no. 1, pp. 24, 28-9, and 32; see also our comments in another context, below, Ch. V, p. 324, fn. 45.

[107] The two clear repetitions are Lalitā and Puṣṭi (see *Mat. P.*, 13. 26, 34 and 47), but the inclusion of Lakṣmī with Mahā-Lakṣmī, Nārāyaṇī with Vaiṣṇavī, *etc.*, should also be regarded as repetitive.

[108] Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 53-4.

We have seen that the eulogies of the Great Goddess or passages which can be interpreted similarly provide another source of the names of goddesses. In the light of our inference noted above, it would appear that certain general statements, also frequently seen in these eulogies, that the Goddess is present everywhere, in all kinds of places, may be accepted more or less in a literal sense. It is a little difficult to cite such statements from the *Devī-māhātmya* in which the mythical account of the Goddess generally takes a strong philosophical colour. But the shorter and simpler eulogies in other texts are quite expressive in this respect. Thus the apocryphal *stotra* to Durgā sung by Arjuna in the *Mahābhārata* contains the statement that the Goddess abides eternally in her various shrines and sacred places throughout Jambū-dvīpa.[114] The similarly apocryphal *Āryā-stava* in the *Harivaṁśa* refers to the Goddess residing in mountains rivers, caves, groves and forests.[115] The Purāṇic myths of the birth of Kṛṣṇa and the destruction of Kaṁsa also contain similar suggestions. According to this myth,[116] the Goddess, generally called Nidrā or Yoga-māyā, took birth as the daughter of Yaśodā, and, later secretly exchanged with Kṛṣṇa who was born at the same time to Devakī, sternly warned Kaṁsa of his imminent death when he tried to kill her by dashing her against a stone. The various versions of the myth record the assurance of Viṣṇu—Kṛṣṇa to the Goddess that, released from Kaṁsa's grasp, she would fly up towards the sky, be accepted by Indra as sister, find her permanent abode on the Vindhyas, *etc.*[117] It is in the context of this assurance that *Harivaṁśa* speaks of the earth being adorned by thousands of sacred places of Goddess,[118] and similar statements are contained also in the *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata-Purāṇas.*[119]

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[109] Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, pp. 3 ff. As far as relevant to our subject, we have already analysed in the above pages the lists cited by Hopkins and Agrawala.

[110] See *Mbh.*, IX. 45.29; *Mat. P.*, 179.32.

[111] This can be seen in the three separate lists in the *Aṅgavijjā* itself, already referred to.

[112] There are several such names in the lists in *Aṅgavijjā*.

[113] For our same inference based on the analysis of the epic–Purāṇic lists of the so-called Mātṛs, see below, Ch. III.

[114] See *Mbh.*, Cr. edn., Vol. 7, App. I, no. 1, p, 710, 1. 20 :
Jambūkaṭakacaityeṣu nityaṁ saṁnihitālaye.

[115] *Hv.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., II. 3. 6 :
Parvatāgreṣu ghoreṣu nadīṣu ca guhāsu ca,
Vāsaste ca mahādevi vaneṣūpavaneṣu ca.

The types of statements noted above only suggest a widespread cult of local goddesses who, at a certain stage of the development of the cult of the Great Goddess, were regarded as her various forms. Other statements, however, specifically indicate various ethnic origins of some of these deities. Several such statements from the later Purāṇic texts are collected by Hazra,[120] but probably the best known is the one contained in the apocryphal *Āryā-stava* in the *Harivaṁśa* which refers to the Goddess being worshipped by Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas.[121] It may also be added that the Bhagavatī Sahyavāsinī, apparently Durgā-Ambikā or some form of her, seems to be painted as the patron deity of the cāṇḍāla executioners of Cārudatta in the *Mṛcchakaṭika*,[122] and the *Harṣacarita* refers to a shrine of Cāmuṇḍā in a dense grove of the Vindhyan forests peopled by various aboriginal tribes, including the Śabaras.[123] The eulogy of the goddess Vindhyavāsinī in the *Gaūḍavaho* refers pointedly to the Koli women, apparently belonging to some aboriginal tribe, crowding together to make their offerings to the Goddess, and to a man of the Śabara tribe, clad in turmeric leaves, leading the king to the Goddess' shrine.[124] All this evidence finds excellent general corroboration from a statement about the Mātṛs in the *Mahābhārata*, according to which the so-called Mothers are adorned in diverse kinds of ornaments, wear diverse attires and speak diverse language.[125] As noted below in another context, the statement has no special relevance for the well known Mātṛ deities,[126] but it does seem to provide clear indication that many goddesses popularly worshipped in India in the early centuries of the Christian era belonged to different linguistic and ethnic groups.

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[116] For the various versions of this myth, see *Hv.*, chs. 46 ff.; *Viṣ. P.*, V. 1 ff.; *Bhā. P.*, X. 1 ff.

[117] See *Hv.*, 47. 37 ff.; *Viṣ. P.*, V. 1. 71 ff.; *Bhā. P.*, X. 2. 6 ff.

[118] *Hv.*, 47, 48 :
Tataḥ sthānasahasraistvaṁ pṛthivīṁ śobhayiṣyasi.

[119] *Viṣ. P.*, V.1. 81 :
Sthānairanekaiḥ pṛthivīmaśeṣāṁ maṇḍayiṣyasi.
Bhā. P., X. 2. 10-12. The verse 11a reads :
Nāmadheyāni kurvanti sthānāni ca narā bhuvi.
When the predicted events have taken place and the Goddess has issued her warning to Kaṁsa, *Bhā. P.*, X. 4. 13 says :
Iti prabhāṣya taṁ devī māyā bhagavatī bhuvi,
Bahunāma niketeṣu bahunāmā babhūva ha.

[120] Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, II, pp. 17, fn. 62, and 19, fns. 72, 73.

[121] *Hv.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., II, 3. 7 ;
Śabarairbarbaraiścaiva Pulindaiśca supūjitā.

[122] *Mṛcchakaṭika*, Act X, NSP. edn., p. 282.

[123] *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 7th *Ucchvāsa*, p. 68 :
Gahana-taru-ṣaṇḍa-nirmita-cāmuṇḍā-maṇḍapairvanapradeśaiḥ.
For the Vindhyan forest regions peopled by various aboriginal tribes, including Śabaras, see *ibid.*, 8th *Ucchvāsa*, pp. 70 ff.

YAKṢINĪS, NAGINIS, Etc.

Apart from the lists of goddesses and general statements in one context or another suggesting that popular goddesses of various types must have been very numerous and worshipped practically everywhere, several other more or less distinct types of female divinities are independently referred to quite frequently in the literature of our period. We will make only a passing reference to the Yakṣiṇīs and Nāginīs. The cult of the Yakṣiṇīs, more often in their individual forms than in groups, is adequately attested by literature and archaeology, and the same may perhaps he said for the Nāginīs, but these two should rather be seen in the wider contexts of the cults of the Yakṣas[127] and the Nāgas.[128] The literature provides evidence also of the cult of the female Nakṣatras, individually as well as collectively,[129] and it would appear that the Apsarases also

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[124] *Gaūḍavaho*, vv. 319 and 338; see also *ibid.*, Intro., pp. xxii-xxiii.

[125] *Mbh.*, IX. 45. 39 :

Nānābharaṇadhāriṇyo nānāmālyāmbarāstathā,
Nānāvicitraveṣāśca nānābhāṣāstathaiva ca.

[126] See below, Ch, III.

[127] For the cult of the Yakṣas in general, see Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, pts. I & II; also Rhys Davids and Stede, *PED* (PTS), pp. 545-6, s. v. *Yakkha*, *Yakkhinī*; and *Yakkhī*; Shah, U.P., "Yakṣa Worship in Early Jaina Literature", *JOI*, III, 1953-54, pp. 54 ff.; Moti Chandra, "Some Aspects of Yakṣa Cult in Ancient India", *BPWM*, 3 , 1952-53 (1954), pp. 43 ff.; Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, pp. 118 ff. In the *Mahābhārata*, the most representative statements about the cult of the Yakṣiṇīs occur in the Tīrthayātra sections of the *Āraṇyaka-parvan*; see below, pp. 42-3. To the many evidences collected in the works cited above may be added the reference to princess Vāsavadattā performing worship in a Yakṣiṇī shrine in front of the prison gates in the drama *Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa* of Bhāsa; see *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakram*, ed. Devadhar, p. 91.

[128] On the Nāga cult in general, see Vogel, *Indian Serpent Lore*, esp. the Introductory chapter; by the same author, "Nāga Worship in Ancient Mathura", *ASI-AR*, 1908-9, pp. 159 ff.; also Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 23 ff.; Bhattacharya, H.D., in Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 471 ff.; Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 344 ff.; Mahalingam, T.V., "The Nāgas in Indian History and Culture", *JIH*, XLIII, 1965, pp. 1 ff.; esp. 41 ff. There are several figures of Nāginī goddesses of the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods in the Mathura Museum; see Agrawala, *A Catalogue of the Brahmaṇical Images in Mathura Art*, pp. 101-2, 104-5. For a colossal Nāgī image of the Gupta period from Sanchi, see Marshall, *A Guide to Sanchi*, p. 108, For Maṇiyār Maṭh, near Rājgīr (Bihar), which was a great centre of Nāga worship during the Gupta period, see Marshall, "Rājagṛha and its Remains", *ASI-AR*, 1905-6, pp. 103 ff.; Law, B.C., "Rājagṛha in Ancient Literature", *MASI*, no. 58, pp. 33 ff.

[129] See Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 52-3, 92-3, *etc.*; Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, pp. 792 ff. A reference has been made above to certain Buddhist Sanskrit texts which contain benedictions in which the Nakṣatras are asked for protection. For more evidence of Nakṣatra cult, see below, Ch. III.

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commanded worship of some kind.[130] As we have already seen, all these types are included in various lists of popular goddesses. The Deva-kanyās, Deva-kumārīs, Deva-yoṣitās, etc., referred to in various texts are, as suggested by Hopkins, more or less akin to the Apsarases,[131] and, as we have seen, the evidence of Buddhist Sanskrit literature suggests that the so-called "Deva-maidens" were also looked to for protection and good health. There are, however, several other types who are also frequently mentioned in literature, often in contexts suggesting some sort of cult, but whose personality is of the most amorphous kind. Such are the deities, generally feminine, who appear as *genii loci* of trees, groves or forests, villages, cities or houses, rivers, streams, mountains, *etc.*

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GODDESSES OF TREES MOUNTAINS, RIVERS, Etc.

It has been seen above that the *Aṅgavijjā* refers to such goddesses as Latā-devatā and Vanaspati-kanyā. The mention is a little dubious in so far as it remains uncertain whether the divinity of the plant or tree *per se* is intended or the female spirit residing in it, particularly as there is adequate evidence of the existence of both conceptions in Indian thought.[132] Tree and plant worship in India has its own history, starting from the Indus Valley culture and the hymns of the *Ṛg-veda* and continuing up to modern times.[133] Overlooking the fact that a complex tree-symbolism has also entered into Indian philosophical thought[134] and confining ourselves only to the popular manifestation of the worship of the tree and tree-goddess, a distinction may have to be made not only between the concept of the tree itself as divine and the spirit supposed to be residing in it, but also, with respect to the latter, amongst the spirits of trees in general, of particular trees perhaps close to habitation areas, of trees in a grove or forest, and of the spirits of groves and forests as a whole, because the literature seems to provide suggestions for all these distinctions.

As evidence of the worship of goddesses residing in trees, we need only cite what is perhaps the most representative statement on the subject, in the *Mahābhārata.* According to this statement, those desiring children should worship the goddesses born in trees.[135] These goddesses are described as eaters of human flesh and called Vṛddhikā.

पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय

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[130] See Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 159 ff.; also below, Ch. III.

[131] Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 62-3, 160.

[132] See Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 6 ff.; Viennot, *Le Culte de l'arbre dans l'Inde ancienne*, Intro., esp. pp. 2-3.

[133] For one of the best and latest accounts of the Tree cult in ancient India, see Viennot, *Le Culte de l'arbre dans l'Inde ancienne.*

[134] *Ibid.*, Intro., and chs. I and III. For a short but very expressive statement about the cosmic symbolism of the Aśvattha tree, see *Bhagavad-gītā*, XV. 1-2.

[135] *Mbh.*, III. 220. 16 :

> *Striyo mānuṣa-māṁsādā vṛddhikā nāma nāmataḥ,*
> *Vṛkṣeṣu jātāstā devyo namaskāryāḥ prajārthibhiḥ.*

Cf. *Ibid.*, III. 115. 23 ff. where the story is related of Satyavatī and her mother obtaining sons by embracing trees like Aśvattha and Udumbara; see also Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, II, pp. 11-2.

The Kumbhakonam edition of the epic gives the name as Vṛkṣakā or Vṛkṣikā[136] which would appear to be an excellent descriptive designation of these beings. But if Vṛddhikā is the original word, as seems to be the case, it is possible, as pointed out by Agrawala, that the reference is to the same type of goddess who is mentioned a little earlier in the epic as a Bāla-grahā called Āryā,[137] and as Ārya-vṛddhā whose figure, according to the *Kādambarī*,[138] was installed over scattered rice in the lying-in chamber of the queen Vilāsavatī.[139] Agrawala also thinks that the same goddess may be portrayed on a stone plaque of the Kuṣāṇa period from Mathura. He understands the expression *Āyavatī pratithāpitā Āryavatī Arhata pujāye* in the inscription on the figure to mean: "the figure of (the goddess) Āryavatī is installed; the merit of the worship of (the goddess) Āryavatī may accrue towards the worship of the Arhata".[140] In addition, he feels that the modern figures of Bihāī and Bīmātā, whose worship is performed in connection with birth ceremonies, must be the same as the ancient goddess Vṛddhikā who was variously called Āryā, Ārya-vṛddhā, *etc.*

Coomaraswamy was generally inclined to believe that in view of the close connection of the Yakṣa deities with trees, the female figures associated with trees in early Indian art should be understood as representations of Yakṣiṇīs.[141] This may be quite true in many doubtful cases. An incident related in the *Daśakumāra-carita* would also support it. According to this text, Pramati, wandering in the Vindhyas, prepared in the evening to make his bed at the foot of a tree and prayed to the deity resident in the tree for protection; later it is revealed that the deity concerned was Yakṣiṇī Tārāvalī.[142] But Coomaraswamy himself was conscious that a tree-goddess need not invariably be a Yakṣiṇī.[143] He pointed to certain verses in the *Mahābhārata* in which Draupadī, leaning against a Kadamba tree, is queried by Koṭika as to who she was, whether a Devī, or Yakṣī, or Dānavī, or Apsarā, or the wife of a Daitya, or the daughter of a Nāga king, or a Rākṣasī, or the wife of Varuṇa, Yama, Soma or Kubera,[144] suggesting that the motif of the woman under the tree could be identified in many ways.[145] In the case of doubtful figures, such as those on the railing pillars of Bharhut

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136. See Hopkins, *EM*, p. 7; *Mbh.*, III. 220. 16, note.
137. *Mbh.*, III. 219. 40.
138. *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, p. 161 :
Akhila-vrīhī-madhyāvasthāpitāryavṛddhādhyāsita-śayanīya-śirobhāgam. . . .
139. Agrawala, *Kādambarī-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 80, fn. 2.
140. *Ibīd.* For the figure and the inscription, Agrawala cites Smith, *Jaina Stūpas*, etc., pl. 14. The inscription is apparently the same as that included in Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, I, pp, 120-1, no. 25. Sircar reads the relevant line as "Āryavati [pra] tithāpitā [.] Priṁya . . . Āyavaṁti arahata-pūjāye [.]", and is inclined to restore "Priṁya" with missing letters as "Priyatāṁ Bhagavatī", thus strengthening Agrawala's conjecture.
141. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, I, pp. 32 ff .
142. *Daśakumāra-carita*, 5th *Ucchvāsa*, pp. 190 ff .
143. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, I, p. 33, fn. 2, and II, p. 11.
144. *Mbh.*, III. 265. 1-3.
145. The popular architectural term *Śāla-bhañjikā* used for certain types of this motif has been shown to be derived from the name of the Śāla-bhañjikā festival which had an obvious fertility significance; see Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, II, p. 12, and references cited there.

and Mathura, a certain margin has to be left for the possibility that some of them represent Apsarases.[146] The epics do represent the Apsarases also as residing in trees,[147] and the reliable, though early, evidence comes from the Vedic literature that the Apsarases and Gandharvas residing in trees were entreated to be propitious to a passing wedding procession.[148]

Among the types of deities connected with trees, a reference must be made to the Vana-devatās or the Devatās of *upavanas*, *udyānas*, *etc.* These sometimes appear singly, but often as generic names for the sylvan goddesses, their mention frequently serving no other purpose than to indicate that gardens, groves and forests were full of such beings. They are invariably introduced as benign; they are in constant sympathy with the humans, and, being of beautiful appearance, they provide suitable objects for comparison for good-looking women.[149] But if only such a picture of the Vana-devatās were available, they would seem of little significance from the point of view of the popular cult. As it is, their names are mentioned in benedictions; sometimes prayers are addressed to them and occasionally they make gifts. Thus, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Lakṣmaṇa, reluctant to leave Sitā alone in the forest, invokes the *Vana-devatāḥ* to protect her,[150] and later the abducted Sitā herself salutes the deities of the trees in the forest.[151] In the same text, Viśvāmitra invokes the Vanadevatā and leaves his forest hermitage in her charge before going with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to attend the sacrifice organised by Janaka.[152] In the *Uttara-rāma-carita*, the Vana-devatā Vāsanti, the goddess of Janasthāna in the Daṇḍaka forest, appears as a very prominent character. She is pictured as a friend of Rāma and Sitā, and shares their pangs of separation. As the guardian deity of the forest, she welcomes the travellers and invites them to enjoy the woods.[153] In the *Mṛcchakaṭika* of Śūdraka, Viṭa is hesitant to do the bidding of Śakāra to kill Vasantasenā because he is afraid that his evil deeds would then be witnessed by the *Vana-devatāḥ* of the ten directions.[154] In the *Abhijñāna-śākuntala* of Kālidāsa, the elder Gautami is described as advising Śakuntalā to do obeissance to the sylvan goddesses who had been so kind to her and permitted her to depart from her father's home to join her husband.[155] Earlier, in the same text, the Vana-devatās are described as making gifts of jewels to Śakuntalā.[156] In the *Kādambarī* also, the Vana-devatā of Nandana-vana makes a gift of a

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146. Cf., *ibid.*, I, p. 33, fn. 2.
147. See Hopkins, *EM*, p. 72.
148. See *AV*, XIV. 2.9; also Macdonell, *VM*, p. 134; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 184.
149. See Hopkins, *EM*, p. 57; also below.
150. *Rāmāyaṇa*, III. 43. 30.
151. *Ibid.*, III. 47. 32.
152. *Ibid.*, I. 30. 13-4.
153. *Uttara-rāma-carita*, ed. Kane, Act II, pp. 32 ff.; Act III, pp. 61 ff.
154. *Mṛcchakaṭika*, Act VIII, v. 24, NSP. edn., p. 205.
155. *Abhijñāna-śākuntala*, Act IV, NSP. edn., p. 140. The Sanskritized form of Gautamī's statement in Prakrit reads as :
    Jāte ! Jñātijanasnigdhābhiranujñātagamanāsi tapovana-devantābhiḥ.
    Praṇama Bhagavatīḥ.
156. *Ibid.*, Act IV, v. 4. p. 134.

Pārijāta-kusuma-mañjarī to serve as a fragrant ear-ornament for Puṇḍarīka. Bāṇabhaṭṭa describes her as a beautiful young lady clad in a floral garment and intoxicated with drinking the nectar of flowers.[157]

Since the tree-worship is of great antiquity in India, it is quite possible that each of the different concepts of the tree-goddess noted above has a long previous history, but it is not possible to demonstrate it. The Indus Valley culture had both the worship of the sacred trees and of goddesses associated with them, but the fundamental ideas underlying these cults are unknown.[158] Although the deities of the plants, trees and forests do not play a very significant part in the Vedic religion,[159] some aspects of their character do appear to connect them with the tree-goddesses of our period. Thus, the Plants (*Oṣadhi*) were personified as goddesses and called mothers,[160] and the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* prescribes an animal sacrifice to them to remove their obstruction to the attainment of offspring.[161] In this form, they anticipate the cult of individual trees or goddesses associated with them as noted above. The forest as a whole is personified as Araṇyānī in the Ṛg-vedic hymns,[162] but the name is never used in the plural and hardly provides a prototype of the Vana-devatās noted above. Moreover, Araṇyānī seems to have some sinister aspects, apparently connected with the fear naturally associated with a dense forest full of wild beasts. Her conception is nearer to the flesh-eating and fearsome Vṛddhikās, Vṛkṣakās or Yakṣiṇīs of later times.[163] Large trees, called Vanaspati, literally "the lord of the forests", also appear as personified deities in the Ṛg-vedic hymns, both singular and plural, but they are male.[164]

Evidence of goddesses associated with hills and mountains is not as plentiful as of those connected with trees and plants. But the very strong tradition of the Vindhya-vāsinī goddess should not be forgotton. Similarly, the names Haimavatī, Pārvatī, *etc.*, though traditionally understood as referring to the myth of the goddess being the daughter of the Himavat mountain, strongly suggest that several goddess concepts must have been derived from the female spirits of hills and mountains.[165] In the list of the Tīrthas in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, one is a mountain peak, somewhere

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157. *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, pp. 311-2.
158. See Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 63 ff., esp. 65; also our comments on a Mohenjodaro seal representing the epiphany of the tree goddess, below, Ch. III.
159. See Macdonell, *VM*, p. 154; also Keith, *RPVU*, p. 184 and fn. 4.
160. See *RV*, X. 97; also Macdonell, *VM*, p. 154.
161. *TS*, II. 1.5.
162. *RV*, X. 146; also Macdonell, *VM*, p. 154; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 185; Diehl, C.G., "The Goddess of Forests in Tamil Literature", *TC*, XI, no. 4, 1964, pp. 308 ff.
163. See above, pp. 30-1. On the fearsome aspects of Yakṣiṇīs, see esp. Rhys Davids and Stede, *PED* (PTS), p. 546, s.v. *Yakkhinī*; also Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, pp. 9, 25. Diehl has pointed to some early Tamilian forest goddesses who resemble the Vedic Araṇyānī; see Diehl, *op. cit.*, *TC*, XI, no. 4, pp. 309 ff.
164. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 154.
165. See Jacobi, "Brahmanism", *ERE*, 2, p. 813; also Hopkins, *EM*, p. 224. In the Tāraka-vadha episode of the *Matsya Purāṇa*, Umā-Pārvatī is herself shown meeting with and assigning tasks to the tutelary goddess of the mountainous region; see *Mat. P.*, 156. 1-7.

in the Himalayas, which is said to be sacred to Mahā-devi Gauri.[166] Another name of the Goddess which connects her with mountains is Sahya-vāsini.[167] The origin and significance of the name Durgā is undertain. One traditional explanation that the name was given to the Goddess because she destroyed a demon ealled Durgama[168] is apparently later myth-making. The other explanation, seen in the apocryphal hymn to Durgā sung by Yudhiṣṭhira in the *Mahābhārata*, that the Goddess was so called because she rescued people from *durga*, usually translated as "difficulty",[169] is closer to the original significance of the name. The statement that Durgā saves people from *durga* or difficult situations occurs frequently in the eulogies of the Goddess in the *Devī-māhātmya*, and there is no doubt that the intended meaning of the word *durga* in all these places is "difficult" or "difficult situation" of some bind.[170] But it appears that this is only a derivative meaning. The word *durga* literally means "hard to go upon", "difficult of access" and seems to have obvious topographical connotations.[171] It could thus suggest heavily forested mountainous regions and the name may have been originally derived from the concept of a goddess of such regions. This inference is borne out by the contexts in which the word *durga* is sometimes used in the eulogies. Thus, in the passage in Yudhiṣṭhira's *stuti* cited above, the *durgas* or "difficulties" from which the Goddess rescues are specified as arising from dense forests.[172] In reply to Yudhiṣṭhira's hymn, the Goddess assures him that persons invoking her in *atavī*, *durga-kāntāra*, *sāgara*, *gahana-giri*, *etc.*, will have all their wishes fulfilled. Elsewhere the Goddess is addressed as *Durge Kāntāravāsini*, or described as dwelling in *Kāntāra-bhaya-durgeṣu*, *etc.*[173] All this evidence is very suggestive, and the possible original association of Durgā with mountainous regions is clearly indicated.[174] In any case, as we have seen, among the many different places where the Goddess is said to dwell in the apocryphal *Āryā-stava* in the *Harivaṁśa*, *Parvatāgreṣu* appears first.

166. *Mbh.*, III. 82. 131.
167. Monier-Williams, *SED/*, p. 1193, s.v. *Sahya.*
168. See *Mār. P.* 81.46 (tr. Pargiter, p. 518); also Monier-Williams, *SED*, p. 487, s.v. *Durga*, citing *Skanda Purāṇa.*
169. See *Mbh.*, vol. 5, App. I, 4D, p. 301, II. 39-40:
    Durgāttārayase durge tattvaṁ durgā smṛtā janaiḥ,
    Kāntāreṣvavasannānāṁ magnānāṁ ca mahārṇave.
170. *Mār. P.*, 81.11; 82.10; 86.29 (tr. Pargiter, pp. 484, 490, 508 respectively). Hopkins notes: "...her name Durgā is a *lucus a non*, because she saves from *durga*, difficulty"; see *EM*, p. 224.
171. For contrary opinion, see Weber, as cited in Muir, *OST*, IV, p. 428. Weber's explanation of the name Durgā comes quite close to the traditional explanation cotained in Yudhiṣṭhira's *stuti* cited above. Only, in his opinion, like other names of the Goddess such as Kālī and Karālī, Durgā also points towards Agni, and could refer to the violent flame of the fire as *Durgā*, "a protecting fortress", which, like the fire itself, delivers, atones and frees from all *durga* and *durita*. Mazumdar's conjecture that since Durgā appears to have been originally a non-Aryan tribal goddess, her name also must be non-Sanskritic does not appear convincing to us; see Mazumdar, B.C., "Durgā: Her Origin and History", *JRAS*, 1906, p. 358. For an early use of the word *durgā* with possible topographical connotation, inasmuch as it seems to qualify Pṛthivī, see *AV*, XII. 4.23.
172. *Mbh.*, vol. 5, App. I, 4D, p. 301, II.63-4.
173. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, App. I, no. 1, p. 710, II.22, 27.
174. Cf. Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, II, pp. 17; 18, fn. 68; 24.

If the association of goddesses with hills and mountains is often of a less direct and more suggestive kind, the streams and rivers are uniformly divine and called goddesses. It has been seen above that certain texts list among the popular goddesses also the Nadī-devatās. The epics and the *Purāṇas* produce long lists of the holy rivers.[175] An excellent representative statement of the cult of the river goddesses may be seen in the *Rāmāyana*, which describes at length Sītā's invocation of Gaṅgā. Crossing the holy river at the start of their exile, Sītā prays to the goddess with folded hands to protect Rāma and ensure the safe return of her husband, her brother-in-law and herself. In return, she humbly vows to make an offering of a hundred thousand cows, abundant grain and beautiful apparel to brāhmaṇas in order to gratify the goddess.[176] The *Mahābhārata* imagines all rivers as the "Mothers of the world" and calls them *mahā-balāḥ*,[177]; similar statements may be found also in other texts.[178] In its sections on *Upa-nipāta-pratīkāra*, the *Arthaśāstra* has the succinct recommendation to worship the rivers on *parvan* days.[179] In the case of drought, it suggests particularly the worship of Indra, Gaṅgā, *etc.*[180]

It is generally believed that one of the aspects of the religious life in the Indus Valley culture which connects it with the classical Hinduism of later times is the belief in the sanctity of water and in ritual bathing.[181] It may be, therefore, that the

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175. See Hopkins, "The Sacred Rivers of India", in Lyon, D.G. and Moore, G.F. (eds.), *Studies in the History of Religions presented to Crawford Howell Toy*, p. 216; by the same author, *EM*, p. 4. As one instance in the epic, may be seen *Mbh.*, VI. 10.13 ff. The lists of holy rivers in the *Purāṇas* generally appear in their geographical sections; see *e.g.*, *Viṣ.*, *P.*, II. 3; see also Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, p. 1528.

176. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II. 46.67-73:

Madhyaṁ tu samanuprāpya bhāgīrathyāstvaninditā,
Vaidehī prāñjalirbhūtvā tāṁ nadīmidamabravīt. 67
Putro daśarathasyāyaṁ mahārājasya dhīmataḥ,
Nideśaṁ pālayatvenaṁ gaṅge tvadabhirakṣitaḥ. 68
Caturdaśa hi varṣāṇi samagrāṇyuṣya kānane,
Bhrātrā saha mayā caiva punaḥ pratyāgamiṣyati 69
Tatastvāṁ devi subhage kṣemeṇa punarāgatā,
Yakṣye pramuditā gaṅge sarvakāmasamṛddhaye. 70
Tvaṁ hi tripathagā devi brahmalokaṁ samīkṣase,
Bhāryā codadhirājasya loke'sminsaṁpradṛśyase. 71
Sā tvāṁ devi namasyāmi praśaṁsāmi ca śobhane,
Prāptarājye naravyāghre śivena punarāgate. 72
Gavāṁ śatasahasrāṇi vastrāṇyannaṁ ca peśalam,
Brāhmaṇebhyaḥ pradāsyāmi tava priyacikīrṣayā. 73

177. *Mbh.*, VI. 10.35.

178. Cf. *Hv*, 38.75; see also below.

179. *Arthaśāstra*, ed. Kangle, 4.3.10:

Parvasu ca nadīpūjāḥ kārayet.

180. *Ibid.*, 4.3.12. A statement in the *Raghuvaṁśa* (XVI. 21) that in the absence of Rāma, the sandy banks of the river Sarayū had become *bali-kriyā-varjita* suggests regular offerings to the river goddess.

181. See Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, p. 75; Mackay, *Early Indus Civilizations*, pp. 66-7; Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 110; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 18; *etc.*

epic-Purāṇic tradition of the river goddesses is also related in some way to similar beliefs in the chalcolithic culture of the Indus Valley. But this can only be conjectured.[182] The available evidence, however, does suggest a definite and direct link with the religious beliefs of the Vedic people, even though the water deities there do not occupy a very prominent place. In the Ṛg-vedic hymns, the Waters, under the name Āpaḥ, appear as goddesses. Their conception scarcely rises beyond the elemental, but they are spoken of as goddesses, young maidens and wives and, most frequently, as life-giving, nourishing mothers, of Agni in particular.[183] They are also said to cleanse and purify the worshipper. These Waters are sometimes imagined as celestial but, generally speaking, they belong to the atmospheric region and the earth and should be understood as rain water or flowing streams and rivers.[184] The rivers also appear independently as goddesses in the Ṛg-vedic hymns. They are most frequently counted as a group of seven—the *Sapta-sindhavaḥ, etc.*—but several are named, the most prominent being Sarasvati. As with the Āpaḥ, the rivers, though deified, are scarcely personified, the only exception being Sarasvati, although the natural basis is rarely fully forgotten even in her case.[185] In later Vedic and post-Vedic history, the character of Sarasvati grows very complex. She becomes the guardian deity of speech and learning, and it is in this form, generally speaking, that she finds her place in the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina pantheons.[186] She is, of course, also remembered in the lists, or in the contexts, of the holy rivers in the epics and the *Purāṇas*, sometimes at the head, but generally yielding place to Gaṅgā.[187]

[182] It may be mentioned that while the belief in the purifying and healing properties of water is almost universal (see *ERE*, 10, pp. 463-4; *Ibid.*, 12, p. 706), and is fully attested in Indian culture from the Ṛg-vedic period onwards (see Hopkins, op. cit., *Toy Volume*, p. 213; *EM*, p. 3; also below), there is no evidence that the Indus Valley people worshipped river goddesses, though archaeological evidence suggests that they believed in the purifying effects of water; see Mackay, op. cit., p. 66; cf. also the cautious comments by Wheeler, op. cit., p. 110 and fn. 3.

[183] See Macdonell, *VM*, pp. 85-6; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 141-2.

[184] *Ibid.* For Waters as celestial or cosmic in the Ṛg-vedic hymns, see also Apte, V.M., in Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age*, p. 366.

[185] On the conception of the river-goddesses in Vedic religion in general, and that of Sarasvatī in particular, see Macdonell, *VM*, pp. 86 ff.; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 172 ff.

[186] On the evolution of the concept of Sarasvatī in ancient Indian culture, see esp. Bhattacharya, Haridas, "Sarasvatī—the Goddess of Learning", in Belvalkar (ed.), *Commemorative Essays presented to Prof. Kashinath Bapuji Pathak*, pp. 32-52. As the goddess of learning, Sarasvatī is frequently invoked in the beginnings of various treatises (cf. the opening verse in the *Mahābhārata, Harivaṁśa,* and various *Purāṇas*), and the *Purāṇas* also contain eulogies of this goddess (see *Mār. P.*, 21.29 ff. which refers to the Nāga king Aśvatara performing austerities at Plakṣāvataraṇa in the Himalayas, where the river Sarasvatī rises, and reciting a long *stuti* in honour of the goddess; see also *Ibid.*, tr. Pargiter, pp. 127 ff.). For the iconography of *Sarasvatī*, see Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 376 ff. Important evidence, not always utilized, of the prominent place occupied by the goddess in the Buddhist tradition is contained in Mahāyāna text *Suvarṇa-prabhāsottama-sūtra* which devotes a whole chapter to the cult of the goddess Sarasvatī; see *Ibid.*, ed. Nobel, ch. 7, pp. 102 ff.; also *Ibid.*, tr. Emmerick, pp. 43 ff. Nobel has also studied in detail the contents of this chapter in "Das Zauberbad der Göttin Sarasvatī" in *Festschrift Schubring*, pp. 123 ff.

[187] See *e.g.*, *Mbh.*, III. 212.21-4; VI. 10.13. For the mention of the holy river Sarasvatī in the Tīrtha lists of the epic, and for the greatness associated with this river, see below.

In has been noted above that the epics and the *Purāṇas* produce large lists of the holy rivers. There are also statements that there are innumerable rivers and that all are holy.[188] Considering that rivers were imagined as deities and almost invariably bear feminine names, they provide another prolific source of goddesses in ancient India. It was, however, especially Gaṅgā who achieved the greatest prominence and maximum personification. The epics and the *Purāṇas* are full of eulogies of Gaṅgā,[189] and an instance of her adoration by Sītā has been cited above. In a *Jātaka* story, a virtuous man offers rice to Gaṅgā-devatā and the pleased goddess rewards him by restoring his stolen money.[190] The *Uttararāma-carita,* which portrays Gaṅgā as the tutelary goddess of the family of Raghu and Bhagīratha,[191] also speaks of her as surpassing all other deities in power and greatness.[192] It would appear that Gaṅgā absorbed in herself the divinity of the other river goddesses and should be understood as a symbol of all the holy rivers. This inference accords well with the popular epic-Purāṇic conception of Gaṅgā flowing not only on earth but also in the heavens and the nether regions.[193] Parallel to the *Sapta-sindhavaḥ* of the *Ṛg-veda*, there is also the conception of *Sapta-Gaṅgā.*[194] The most important myth connected with the goddess is of her descent from the heavens when she was borne by Śiva on his locks. In her human form, she appears as the younger sister of Umā, co-wife of Śiva and mother of Kumāra-Kārttikeya. She is also the wife of Śāntanu and mother of Bhīṣma. Her parentage is traced to Jahnu and Bhagīratha.[195] In iconography, Gaṅgā, with Yamunā, is frequently depicted in human form riding her crocodile on the door-frames of the mediaeval Hindu shrines.[196]

GODDESSES ASSOCIATED WITH TIRTHAS

Closely connected with the sacred rivers is the institution of the Tīrthas. Tīrthas are holy places, generally, though not invariably, on the banks of sacred rivers. They generally derive their sanctity from that of the rivers streams, *etc.*, on whose banks they are located, but especially from association with places sacred to deities, saints, *etc.* A visit to such holy places, ablutions in the sacred waters there, worship of the deities, observance of fasts, making of gifts of all kinds, *etc.*, are especially recommended in the epic and Purāṇic texts and great merits are promised in return. How the institution began and what might have been the underlying motive behind it is not our concern here.[197] There are two things about the institution, however, which have a great bearing on the question of the widespread cults of goddesses in India in the early centuries of the Christian era. Firstly, even though the history of the idea of Tīrtha, literally "ford", may be taken back to the Vedic times,[198] it is not till the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* that the lists of the Tīrthas and laudatory statements about the great merits of visiting them actually appear.[199] Secondly, as the following perusal at least of the lengthy Tīrtha-yātrā section in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* will show, a very large number of these sacred places seem to have been associated with various kinds of goddesses. This is specifically mentioned in several cases, and a similar inference can be made about a large number of others.

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[188] See Kane, *HD*, IV, p. 560 and fn. 1260. Cf. the statement in *Mbh.*, XII. 255.39: *Sarvā nadyaḥ sarasvatyah*, and similar ones in the *Brahmāṇda* and *Vāyu-purāṇas* cited by Kane.

[189] On Gaṅgā, see Hopkins, op. cit., *Toy Volume*, pp. 223 ff.; *EM*, pp. 5-6; Kane, *HD*, IV, pp. 585 ff.; also Barth, *The Religions of India*, p. 278.

[190] See *Jātaka*, ed. Fausböll, II, pp. 423 ff. (*Macchuddāna-jātaka*).

[191] *Uttara-rāma-carita*, ed. Kane, Act I, p. 15; Act VII, p. 153; *etc.*

[192] *Ibid.*, Act III, p. 62:
...sarvadevatābhyaḥ prakṛṣṭatamamaiśvaryaṁ mandākinīdevyāḥ...

[193] See Hopkins, op. cit., *Toy Volume*, pp. 223 ff.

[194] *Ibid.*, esp. p. 226; cf. also *Vi. Dh. P.*, III. 221.63 which prescribes the worship of the *Sapta-prakārā* Gaṅgā.

[195] See Hopkins, op. cit., *Toy Volume*, pp. 223-4; *EM*, pp. 5-6.

[196] For the latest and best study of the iconography of the goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā, see Viennot, *Les Divinitès fluviales Gaṅgā et Yamueā, etc.*

The Tīrtha-yātrā sections in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* list a large number of Tīrthas.[200] We may first note those about which it is either specifically said that they are sacred to some goddess or the other or a similar inference may easily be made. Thus, somewhere in the north-western part of the country, there is the sacred place, called Yoni, of the goddess Bhīmā, and by bathing there, a man is supposed to become like the son of the goddess.[201] Bhīmā mentioned here is apparently the same goddess as her namesake described in the *Devī-māhātmya* as a form of the Great Goddess, especially worshipped in the Himalayas.[202] In the same general direction, not far from Kurukṣetra, is located the residence of a "world-famous" Yakṣī, near some sacred place of Mahādeva,[203] and at Rājagṛha another Yakṣī shrine is mentioned where regular offerings were made.[204] There is a Śrī-tīrtha, giver of prosperity, apparently sacred to Śrī-Lakṣmī,[205] and the same goddess is said to be worshipped after bathing in Ahalya-hrada, which is located in the sacred forest of Brahmarṣi Gautama.[206] A Śaṅkhinī-tīrtha is specifically said to be the Tīrtha of the goddess,[207] and a bath in the Mātṛ-tīrtha, apparently sacred to the Mātṛ-goddesses, is said to ensure many offspring and prosperity.[208] Madhuvaṭī also is a Tīrtha of the goddess,[209] and the confluence of Sarasvatī and Aruṇā is called Devī-tīrtha.[210] Devī Rudra-patnī is said to be seen at Anaraka-tīrtha,[211] and there is a special Tīrtha of Mahā-puṇyā Sarasvatī, known as Plakṣā-devī.[212] Several verses are devoted to the "world renowned" shrine of the goddess Śākambharī, the guardian deity of herbs, vegetables, *etc.*, and reference is made to the *ṛṣis* being attracted there on account of the devotion to the goddess.[213] Here again, the reference is clearly to the same goddess Śākambharī who is described as a form of the Mahā-devī in the *Devī-māhātmya*.[214]

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[197] On the Tīrthas in general, see the brief comments by Barth, *The Religions of India*, pp. 277-8; also Kane, *HD*, IV, sec. IV, esp. ch. XI, pp. 552 ff.; Patil, *Cultural History from the Vāyu Purāṇa*, App. B, pp. 333 ff.; Bharati, Agehananda, "Pilgrimage in the Indian Tradition", *HR*, 3, Summer 1963, pp. 135 ff. We do not agree with Patil that brāhmaṇas might have developed their institution of Tīrtha-yātrā following Buddhist models; see below. The constant emphasis by Bharati on the predominantly Tantric background of this institution also appears to us somewhat misplaced and misleading.

[198] See Barth, op. cit., p. 62; Kane, op. cit., pp. 554 ff.

[199] See Kane, op. cit., p. 561.

[200] See Barth, *The Religions of India*, p. 277, fn. 4. The account of the Tīrthas in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* forms a continuous section but is actually composed of separate narratives. In the first and the longest one (chs. 10-3), Nārada relates to Yudhiṣṭhira what is said to have been narrated by Pulastya to Bhīṣma. It follows a very rough geographical order and it is not always possible to guess the precise locality of a particular Tīrtha. The second one (chs. 84-8) is related by Dhaumya to Yudhiṣṭhira. This part classifies the sacred places as belonging to east, south, west and north, but within each part the order appears to be only roughly geographical. After this, the actual pilgrimage of Yudhiṣṭhira, *etc.*, in the company of Lomaśa, is described (ch. 89 onwards). On the whole, the account gives the impression of a more detailed and relatively accurate geography of North India than of South.

[201] *Mbh.*, III. 80.100-1.

[202] *Mār. P.*, 88.47-8. (The Veṅkateśvara Press edn. used here wrongly lists v. 47a in the previous verse): also *Ibid.*, tr. Pargiter, p. 518. See also Banerjea, J.N., "Identification of Some Ancient Indian Place-names". *IHQ*, XIV, 1931, pp. 751 ff., and by the same author, *DHI*, pp. 83-4.

[203] *Mbh.*, III. 81.19. Coomaraswamy seems to confuse this with the Yakṣī shrine at Rājagṛha, mentioned in the inmediately following foot-note 5; see Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, I, pp. 9 and 25.

A Tīrtha called Dhūmāvatī, close to a sacred spot of Mahādeva, is also said to be sacred to the goddess.[215] Since a visit to Brāhmaṇī-tīrtha promises residence in the Brahma-loka,[216] the reference may be to a spot sacred to the consort of Brahmā. The "renowned" Tīrtha called Yoni-dvāra, a visit to which is said to give freedom from rebirth, must certainly be regarded as a place sacred to some goddess.[217] At Jyeṣṭhila-tīrtha is to be seen the god Viśveśvara with the goddess.[218] There is the significant mention of the "world-renowned" mountain-peak of the great goddess Gaurī and a Stana-kuṇḍa close to it.[219] The Virajā-tīrtha close to Vaitaraṇī river, which would be localized by the sequence of the description somewhere in Orissa,[220] may also have been famous on account of some goddess, because the same general area has yielded magnificent colossal statues of the Mātṛs of early mediaeval period.[221] Mahādeva is

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204. *Mbh.*, III. 82.90.
205. *Ibid.*, III. 81.37.
206. *Ibid.*, III. 82.93.
207. *Ibid.*, III. 81.41.
208. *Ibid.*, v. 47.
209. *Ibid.*, v. 79.
210. *Ibid.*, vv. 131-2.
211. *Ibid.*, vv. 146 ff., esp. 148.
212. *Ibid.*, III. 82.5.. The goddess Sarasvatī in human form is said to have been seen at a place visited by the Pāṇḍavas: see *Ibid.*, III. 132.2
213. *Mbh.*, III. 82.11-5.
214. *Mār. P.*, 88.43-6 (tr. Pargiter, p. 518).
215. *Mbh.*, III. 82.20-1.
216. *Ibid.*, v. 52.
217. *Ibid.*, v. 83.
218. *Ibid.*, vv. 115-6.
219. *Ibid.*, vv. 131-2.
220. *Ibid.*, III. 83.6-7; cf. also *Ibid.*, III. 114.4, where the river Vaitaraṇī is placed in the Kaliṅga country.
221. See below, Ch. III, p. 154; see also Sircar, D.C., "Two Inscriptions from Jajpur", *EI*, XXVIII, pp. 184-5.

said to reside with Devi at Śrīparvata.[222] There is a reference to a "world renowned" shrine of the goddess Gāyatrī.[223] Perhaps the Jāti-mātṛ-hrada[224] has some relationship with the Jāta-mātṛ-devatā to whom a reference has been made earlier. When the Pāṇḍavas actually embark on their pilgrimage, amongst the several sacred places they visit one bears the name Nārī-tīrtha,[225] and must be regarded as sacred to some goddess.

The name of a so-called "famous" tīrtha Devikā and the statement that Maheśvara is worshipped there[226] might suggest that it was also associated with some feminine deity. There should be no doubt, however, of the association of goddesses with Tīrthas which are described as of the Kumārikās of Śakra,[227] or which bear such names as Kanyā-tīrtha, Kanyāśrama, *etc.*[228] Particular mention may be made of one such Tīrtha said to be to the south of the Kāverī and on the shores of the ocean,[229] because it is probably this that the *Periplus* refers to as Comari where men and women came to consecrate themselves for life, bathe and dwell in celibacy, and where a goddess once dwelt and bathed.[230] The Pṛthivī-tīrtha[231] is likely to have been sacred to the Earth goddess; Kṛttikā and Maghā-tīrthas[232] of the female Nakṣatras of those names, and Urvaśī-tīrtha[233] of the homonymous Apsaras.

Apart from the above instances which are more or less certain as evidence of sacred spots of various goddesses, many other names and places enumerated in the epic list of the Tīrthas may be of a similar kind. Unlike the names of the rivers, the Tīrtha-names are not invariably feminine,[234] but they are generally so, at least in the list as given in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* of the epic. This is probably because many names are simply the names of rivers. A large number of these are easily identifiable as the names of the well known rivers of India, like Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Śoṇa, Lauhitya,

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[222] *Mbh.*, III. 83.16-8.

[223] *Ibid.*, vv. 26-7.

[224] *Ibid.*, vv. 34, 36.

[225] *Mbh.*, III. 118.4.

[226] *Ibid.*, III. 80.110-12, 115. Verse 113 in this place refers to a Tīrtha of Rudra called Kāmākhya. It is described as served by Devarṣis and as a giver of quick "siddhis". Since the name is almost certainly identical with Kāmākhyā of the later tradition as a great centre of the Tantric worship of the Goddess, the association with Rudra and reference to "siddhis" would suggest association with some goddess also in the epic verse; see also Kakati, *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, p. 1.

[227] *Mbh.*, III. 80.97.

[228] *Ibid.*, III. 81.94, 165; 82.117-8; 83.34; etc. V.S. Agrawala thought that Kanyā-tīrtha probably refers to Kānya-kubja; see his *Bhārata-Sāvitrī*, Vol. I, p. 245.

[229] *Ibid.*, III. 83.21.

[230] *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (tr. Schoff), p. 46.

[231] *Mbh.*, III. 81.11.

[232] *Ibid.*, III. 82.46.

[233] *Ibid.*, v. 136.

[234] Cf. Hopkins, op. cit., *Toy Volume*, pp. 214-5. In their mythological aspect, the rivers are distinctly feminine, whether they bear masculine names or feminine. Tīrthas, as such, are neuter and remain neuter in their personified state, but that does not affect our argument.

Narmadā, Godāvari, Kāveri, *etc.*, but many others may be of a similar kind. In the case of Tirthas bearing names of rivers, therefore, the sentiment of visit to the holy river goddess can always be suspected. But some feminine names may have been names of actual goddesses which are no more identifiable. It is interesting to see that two sacred places bear names like *Gavāṁ bhavana* and Kapilā[235] which might suggest some association with the holy cow.

Our analysis of the lists of Tīrthas in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* clearly shows that these sacred watering places were frequently associated with female deities of various kinds.[236] Since the epic lists try to follow a rough geographical scheme and embrace practically the whole of India, they easily provide a general indication of the very widespread cults of popular goddesses in India in the early centuries of the Christian era. That pilgrimages to the sacred spots were not always looked on with favour by the orthodox brahmanical tradition[237] is evidence of the popular nature of these holy spots. This is also suggested by the detailed statements in which the visit to the Tīrthas is prescribed as a more economical but an equally or even more efficacious substitute for the expensive sacrifices of the orthodox tradition.[238]

GODDESSES AS GUARDIAN DEITIES OF VILLAGES, CITIES, ETC.

The tutelary deities of villages and cities were also generally goddesses. There is little literary evidence in our period for direct worship of the tutelary goddess of a village under the title Grāma-devatā—a term so frequently used for the modern phenomenon of village goddesses, especially in South India and occasinally in the North.[239] But the existence of such goddesses and their worship may be safely presumed. Perhaps also it is with reference to such deities, if not especially referring to them, that the eulogies speak of the Great Goddess being present in every place and having her shrine everywhere. One such statement in the apocryphal hymn to the Goddess in the *Bhīṣma-parvan* has been cited above. Hazra quotes verses from the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* which refer to the Goddess being found in every *sthānā*, *pura* and *grāma*.[240] The late *Devī-bhāgavata Purāṇa* specifically speaks of the various forms of the Goddess as Grāma-devis and refers to their worship in villages and cities.[241] In any case, there is an interesting inscription of the early Kuṣāṇa period from Mathura which greatly strengthens our presumption. It is engraved on a stone sculpture and records the dedication of a shrine in the 10th year of the reign of Kaniṣka.[242] The concluding portion of the record was first read by Lüders as *Priyatāṁ devi grāmasya*, and although he was later inclined to revise the reading of the last word as *grāmeṇa*,[243] other epigraphists have adopted his original reading.[244] However, whether the meaning be "May the goddess of the village be pleased" or "May the goddess be pleased with the village",[245] the cult of the tutelary goddess of the village is clearly indicated. It is doubtful whether the expression *Utarāyaṁ Navamikāyaṁ* in the inscription gives the name of the goddess as Utarā (or Uttarā) Navamikā or records the locality where the shrine was built.[246] The stone sculpture, on which the inscription is engraved, shows a man and a woman seated on a bench. Since over the head of the man there appears something which, according to Bühler, may be a mutilated snake-hood and since the stone immediately above the woman's head is broken, allowing for the possibility that there may have been a similar hood there, he was inclined to believe that the scene represented a Nāga couple, and the benediction in the inscription must refer to a Nāgi goddess, particularly as Mathura is known to have been a centre of serpent worship during the period.[247] There is nothing improbable in a snake-goddess being the tutelary deity of a rural locality, but Bühler's suggestion must remain problematic for want of clearer evidence. In any case, the inscription, a rare one of its kind and for its period, serves as a very clear pointer to the fact that villages had their own tutelary deities and that probably they were very frequently goddesses of one kind or another.

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[235] *Mbh.*, III. 81.38, 40; cf. 82.27 ff.

[236] Cf. Hopkins, *EM*, p. 11.

[237] See Barth, *The Religions of India*, p. 277, and Kane, HD, IV, p. 561, where it is pointed out that the *Smṛtis* of Manu end Yājñavalkya do not attach much importance to pilgrimages; see also Hopkins, op. cit., *Toy Volume*, pp. 213-4, 225. The first large section on the merits of visiting the Tīrthas and Tīrtha-lists in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* is said to have been narrated to Bhīṣma because he had grave doubts about the efficacy of these practices; see *Mbh.*, III. 80.25-8.

[238] See *Mbh.*, III. 80.29 ff., esp. 34-8.

[239] See Oppert, *The Original Inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa*, pp. 450 ff.; Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India*, esp. chs. I and II; Hornell, James, "The Ancient Village Gods of South India", *Antiquity*, XVIII, 1944, pp. 78 ff.; *ERE*, 2, pp. 486-7; 4, p. 606; 5, pp. 9-10; 6, p. 698; 8, p. 238; 9, pp. 66, 566; *etc.*; also Monier-Williams, *Brāhmanism and Hindūism*, p. 225: Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, p. 51.

[240] Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, II, p. 17, fn. 62.

[241] *Dev. Bhā. P.*, IX. 1.137a:

Yā yāśca grāmadevyaḥ syustāḥ sarvāḥ prakṛteḥ kalāḥ.

Ibid., v. 158a:

Pūjitā grāmadevyaśca grāme ca nagare mune.

The *Devī-bhāgavata* is a sectarian Śākta work compiled sometime in the 11th-12th century A.D.; on the nature and contents of this work and its date, see Hazra, op. cit., pp. 329 ff., esp. 346-7. Oppert quotes the following interesting verse from *Āgama-Smṛti-sāra* according to which the Grāma-devatās are deities of the Śūdras:

Brāhmaṇānāṁ śivo devaḥ kṣatriyāṇāṁ tu mādhavaḥ,
Vaiśyānāṁ tu bhaved brahmā śūdrāṇāṁ grāmadevatāḥ.

See Oppert, op. cit., p. 450, fn. 231.

[242] Lüders, H., "Three Brahmi Inscriptions: I. British Museum Stone Inscription of the Time of Kaniṣka", *EI*, IX, 1907-08, pp. 289-241, with plates; by the same author, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, pp. 208-9; Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, I, pp. 138-9.

[243] See Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions* p. 209 and fn. 3.

[244] See Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, I, p. 138. The grammatically correct Sanskritized form of the concluding line cited above will be *Priyatāṁ devī grāmasya*.

[245] Cf. the two alternative translations in Lüders, op. cit.

[246] See Lüders, op. cit. A reference has been made above to the mention of Navamikā in a Buddhist Sanskrit text. Lüders also pointed to it.

[247] For the description of the sculpture and its identification, see Lüders, op. cit. On the popularity of serpent worship in the Mathura region, see above, discussion on Nāginīs.

There is adequate literary evidence, on the other hand, indicating that the guardian deities of cities, the Nagara-devatā, were generally feminine divinities. In the *Mṛcchakaṭika*, the heroine Vasantasenā, running away in fright from Śakāra, is compared to a Nagara-devatā.[248] The *Daśakumāra-carita* of Daṇḍin similarly compares the daughter of a city merchant, wearing glittering ornaments and walking at night, and Rāgamañjarī, the younger sister of the courtesan Kāmamañjarī, to a Nagara-devatā, and on both occasions makes the interesting comment that the young ladies appeared like the guardian goddess of the city incensed at the theft committed in the city.[249] The prescription of the *Arthaśāstra*, therefore, that the Nagara-devatā should be placed towards the north should refer to the shrine of the tutelary goddess of the city.[250]

In the *Raghuvaṁśa* of Kālidāsa, the tutelary goddess of the city of Ayodhyā appears as a beautiful young lady before Kuśa and carries on a long conversation with him. She is portrayed as lamenting the absence of Rāma and requests the young prince to occupy the paternal throne. Kuśa is said to have gladly obliged her, whereupon the pleased goddess "forsook her embodied form and disappeared".[251] It is possible; though not certain, that the text also alludes in the same context to the worship of this goddess, as well as other deities, through animal sacrifice.[252] In the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the queen Vilāsavatī is represented as performing worship in the shrine of the Avanti-mātṛs, the guardian deities of the city of Avanti, for the safe return of her

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248. *Mṛcchakaṭika*, Act I, v. 27, NSP. edn., p. 22.

249. *Daśakumāra-carita*, 2nd *Ucchvāsa*, NSP. edn., p. 99:
Athāsau nagaradevateva nagaramoṣaṛoṣitā niḥsaṁbādhavelāyāṁ
niḥsṛtā saṁnikṛṣṭā kācidunmiṣadbhūṣaṇā yuvatirāvirāsit.
Ibid., p. 109:
Athāsau nagaradevateva nagaramoṣaroṣitā lilā-kaṭākṣa-mālā-
śṛṅkhalābhirnīlotpala-palāśa-śyāmalābhirmāmabadhnāt.

250. *Arthaśāstra*, ed. Kangle, 2.4.15; also *Ibid.*, tr. Kangle, p. 79. We believe that Kangle's rendering of the expression *nagara-rāja-devatā-loha-maṇī-kāravo* as "the tutelary deities of the city and the king, the workers in metals and jewels" is preferable to Shamasastry's "the royal tutelary deity of the city, *etc.*" (see *Arthaśāstra*, tr. Shamasastry, p. 54), or Stein's "workers in metals and precious stones for the town, the kin and the deities" (see Stein, O., "Arthaśāstra and Śilpaśāstra—II", *Ar. O.*, VIII, no. 1, May 1936, p. 88).

251. *Raghuvaṁśa*, XVI. 4-23. The v. 9, in which the goddess identifies herself, runs as:
Tamabravītsā guruṇānavadyā yā nītapaurā svapadonmukhena,
Tasyāḥ puraḥ samprati vītanāthāṁ jānīhi rājannadhidevatāṁ mām.

252. *Ibid.*, v. 39:
Tapaḥ saparyāṁ sapaśūpahārāṁ puraḥ parārdhyapratimā-gṛhāyāḥ,
Upoṣitair vāstuvidhānavidbhir nirvartayāmāsa raghupravīraḥ.
Mallinātha's commentary seems to understand *puraḥ* in the sense "in front of", and does not try to specify what deities may be meant by *parārdhyapratimā-gṛhāyāḥ*. Our inference that the deities understood here, before whose shrines the offerings of animal flesh were made, could also include the tutelary goddess of Ayodhyā is based on the fact that the whole of the preceding part of this chapter is occupied with the dialogue between Kuśa and this goddess, the arrival of the former at Ayodhya and his causing to repair and renew the neglected city. Cf. also *Ibid* , XVII. 36, which refers to king Atithi adoring *Ayodhyā-devatāḥ*.

son Candrāpīḍa.[253] Perhaps the reference is to the same locally renowned shrine of the Mātṛs where the queen is earlier said to have worshipped to obtain a son.[254] Thus the Mātṛs, who are known to have had a popular cult in the area,[255] also appear to have occasionally obtained the status of tutelary deities of cities. But even if the so-called Avanti-mothers are different, the reference to their being Avanti-nāma-nagari-devatā and their worship by a queen are significant. It may be added here that the goddess Lakṣmi is portrayed as the tutelary deity of the city of Madurai in an early Tamil poem, *The Garland of Madurai*, dated approximately in the 3rd-4th century A.D. The poem also refers to the massive city gate with posts carved with images of the goddess and grimy with oblations of ghee poured upon it to bring safety and prosperity to the city.[256]

The much discussed gold coin of the "City of Puṣkalāvati" showing on the obverse a standing crowned goddess and the Kharoṣthi legend *Pukhalavadi devada* on the right,[257] may perhaps be cited as another early evidence of the Indian tradition of the cult of tutelary goddesses of cities. As it is, since the coin is almost certainly the issue of a foreign ruler, probably Scythian,[258] is executed in Greek style[259] and shows the goddess on the obverse as wearing a mural crown, it should be regarded as a representative of the Greek tradition of city cults,[260] like the copper coin type of Eucratides bearing on the reverse the Kharoṣthī legend *Kaviśiye nagara-devata* and showing a similar but enthroned goddess,[261] and many other coins of late Indo-Greek and Śaka kings on which the city goddess is recognized without the benefit of identifying legends.[262] But inasmuch as the female figure on the obverse of the coin of the City of Puṣkalāvatī has been frequently understood as an Indian goddess,[263] the influence of the Indian tradition of the cult of city goddesses is clearly suggested. It is uncertain, however, which Indian goddess is represented on the coin. Since the figure has often been supposed to hold a lotus in its right hand,[264] she has been sometimes identified as Śri-Lakṣmī.[265] The legend *uṣabhe* (=*vṛṣabha*) and the bull on the reverse led Banerjea to suggest that the goddess on the obverse may be Durgā-Ekānaṁśā or Pārvatī, the consort of Śiva, whose characteristic emblem is the bull.[266] More recently, Gupta has tried to read the complete legend on the obverse, including the undeciphered portion on the left, as *Pukhalavadi devada aṁbi*, and feels that *aṁbi* may stand for Ambā, Ambikā, or simply a mother-goddess. He has also pointed out that the goddess holds a long spear under her left arm, and the object held in her right hand may be a club.[267] If Gupta's suggestions are accepted, Banerjea's identification of the figure as the consort of Śiva may be strengthened. But an accurate identification does not seem possible. Even if the legend to the left on the obverse be *aṁbi*, it would give no certain indication, as Gupta is aware, that the figure is to be identified as Ambikā. Moreover, it is not improbable that the object in the right hand of the city-goddess of Puṣkalāvatī, the "city of lotuses", is a lotus flower.[268] But whatever the identification of the figure, the general consensus that it represents an Indian deity in the Greek style greatly strengthens our inference that the guardian deities of cities in the Indian tradition were frequently feminine. It is on the strength of such traditions that certain female figures in the representations of the *Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa* of Buddha in early Buddhist reliefs are frequently recognized as the guardian goddess of the city.[269]

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[253] *Kādambarī*, ed, Parab, p. 649:
Candrāpīḍasyaivāgamanāyopayācitaṁ kartumavantīnāma-nagarī-devatā-nāmavantīmātṛṇāmāyatanaṁ nirgatā vilāsavatī...

[254] *Ibid.*, p. 145; see also below, Ch. III.

[255] See below, Ch. III.

[256] See Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 203-4.

[257] See Gardner, *BMC. Gr, Scy.*, p. 162 and pl. XXIX. 15; Rapson, in Rapson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of India*, I, pp. 557, 587, and pl. VI. 10. A few other references are cited below at appropriate places.

[258] Gardner has classified it as "Indo-Scythic: Uncertain"; see Gardner, op. cit.

[259] Cf. Rapson, *op. cit.*, p. 557.

[260] Tyche may be said to be the typical Greek deity swaying the fortunes of a city, her Roman counterpart being Fortuna. In actual practice, however, many goddesses, and sometimes gods, appear as tutelary deities of cities. It is also interesting to note that only Athena and Zeus obtain the epithets *Polias* and *Polieus* respectively. On Greco-Roman cults of city deities in general, see Hill, G.F., "City, City-gods," *ERE*, 3, pp. 680-1; on the influence of the *Polis* on Greek religion, see Farnell, "Greek Religion", *ERE*, 6, pp. 404-5; on Athena Polias and Zeus Polieus, see Farnell, *op, cit.*, p. 396, and by the same author, *The Cults of the Greek States*, I, pp. 56 ff. and 299.

[261] See Narain, *The Coin-types of the Indo-Greek Kings*, p. 11; Lahiri, *Corpus of Indo-Greek Coins*, pp. 33, 126-7, both citing Whitehead, "Notes on the Indo-Greeks: II", *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1947, pp. 29 ff.) who rejected the identification of the figure on the reverse as Zeus enthroned and, instead, suggested that it represents a goddess, probably Demeter or Tyche. On the basis of the general resemblance of this type with the coin-type of the City of Puṣkalāvatī, and the presumption that Nagara-devatās in Indian tradition are generally goddesses, we naturally, support Whitehead's identification (for contra, see Banerjea, *DHI.*, p. 148 and fn. 1). We also agree with Narain's suspicion that this coin-type was not struck by Eucratides I but by some later king.

We do not know whether the Deśa-devatā or Deśa-daivata referred to in the *Arthaśāstra*[270] as tutelary deities of the region or kingdom were male or female. Equally uncertain is the sex of the *Dig-devatāḥ*, provision for whom in the lay-out of the city is made in the same text.[271] If they are identical with the well known Dikpālas, they are obviously all male deities.[272] On the other hand, we have seen that the *Aṅgavijjā* mentions Diśa-kumārī goddesses, and both the Jaina and the Buddhist traditions assign goddesses to various directions. In the rite of the *Pañcamahāyajña*, the *Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra* prescribes offerings also to the presiding deities of the quarters,[273] but they are apparently male deities[274] and have to be understood somewhat in the tradition of the later Dikpālas. However, even though there is no marked personification, the *Atharva-veda* imagines the "five directions (or regions)" as goddesses and directs prayers to them, along with the seasons and the "fangs" of the year.[275] It is probable, therefore, that the Deśa-devatās and Dig-devatās of the later texts like the *Arthaśāstra* were also popular goddesses. An indirect indication to that effect may be obtained from the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. Considering that most of the deities whom the queen Vilāsavatī is said in this text to have worshipped to obtain a son are female,[276] it is highly probable that the Dig-devatās too, whom she is said to have propitiated on the cross-roads at night while seated in a *maṇḍala* drawn by the priest-magicians,[277] were of a similar character.

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[262] See Narain, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 32-3; Lahiri, *op. cit.*, p. 33; Jenkins and Narain, *The Coin-types of the Śaka-Pahlava Kings of India*, pp. 1-2, 8-9, 10, 13-5 and 24; cf. also Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India* pp. 254, 353 and fn. 1.

[263] See Rapson, *op. cit.*, p. 557.

[264] *Ibid.*, pp. 557, 587.

[265] See Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 111, citing Coomaraswamy.

[266] *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 257.

[267] Gupta, P.L., "The City Goddess of Puṣkalāvatī", *JNSI*, XX, pt. I, 1958, pp. 68-70, and pl. I. B.N. Mukherjee reads the complete legend on the obverse as (*Pa*) *khalavadi devada* (or *ta*) *aṁpae*, and translates it as 'of *Aṁpa* (Amvā or Ambā), the deity of Pakhalavadi', *i.e.*, Puṣkalāvati. He too feels that the association of bull helps identify the goddess Aṁbā as the consort of Śiva. He disagrees with Gupta that the goddess holds a club is her right hand and a spear in her left. See Mukherjee, *Nanā on Lion*, pp. 74 ff.

[268] Cf. Rapson, *op. cit.*, p. 557, and Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 71, 74.

[269] See Barua, *Barhut*, I, p. 56; Foucher, *L'art Grèco-bouddhique*, I, pp. 360 f., as cited by Stein, "Arthaśāstra and Śilpaśāstra – IV", *Ar, O.*, X, 1938, p. 206 (see also Marshall, *A Guide to Sanchi*, p. 61).

[270] *Arthaśāstra*, ed. Kangle, 13.2.15; 13.5.8.

The *Arthaśāstra* provides also for the installation of the *Vāstu-devatāḥ* in their proper places in the city,[278] but, judged by the Vedic brahmanical tradition of Vāstoṣpati,[279] he may be a male deity. The Gṛha-devatās on the other hand are often likely to have been feminine divinities. Perhaps the best indication of this is contained in the story of Rākṣasī Jarā in the *Mahābhārata*, who, from being originally an ogress, is ultimately transformed into a giver of children.[280] In identifying herself to the king, Jarā makes the statement that she lived happily in his house and obtained worship, and that she had granted a son to him in return.[281] This, along with the statement that the king later ordered a big celebration in her honour,[282] suggests that she was the tutelary deity of the royal palace, concerned with the welfare of its residents, especially children. It is probable, therefore, that the *Gṛhya-devatāḥ*, frequently referred to in the classical Sanskrit texts are such patron deities. Thus, the *gṛheṣu gṛha-devatāḥ* who, along with several other divinities, are cited in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as having been witnesses to Daśaratha's pledge to Kaikeyī,[283] are probably goddesses, as also the *Gṛhyāḥ devatāḥ* whose worship is recommended in the *Mahābhārata*.[284] Probably it is some such tutelary goddess of the house whom Cārudatta is said to have worshipped, in the dramas of Bhāsa and Śūdraka, before he instructed his Vidūṣaka friend to make the offerings to the Mātṛs at the cross-roads,[285] and before whom Kāntimatī is described as bowing again and again in the *Daśakumāra-carita*.[286]

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[271] *Arthaśāstra*, ed, Kangle, 2.4.20.

[272] On the Dikpālas, see Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 519 ff.

[273] *Pār. GS.*, II. 9.5 (see *SBE*, XXIX, p. 320).

[274] Cf. *ŚGS*, II. 14.6 ff. (see *SBE*, XXIX, pp. 85 ff.).

[275] *AV*, XI. 6.22:

> *Yā devīḥ pañca pradiśo ye devā dvādaśa ṛtavaḥ,*
> *Saṁvatsarasya ye daṁṣṭrāste naḥ santu sadā śivāḥ*

[276] On the *devatārādhana* of Vilāsavatī to obtain a son, see *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, pp. 143-6.

[277] *Ibid.*, p. 144:

> *Mahānarendra-likhita-maṇḍala-madhya-vartinī vividha-balidānānandita-*
> *digdevatāni bahula-caturdaśī-niśāsu catuṣpathe snapana-maṅgalāni bheje.*

As pointed out by Agrawala (see Agrawala, *Kādambarī—Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 70, fn. 2), *Mahā-narendra* is used here in the sense of priest-magician. Bhānucandra's commentary is obviously wrong in taking the word as referring to the king.

[278] *Arthaśāstra*, ed. Kangle, 2.4.18; also *Ibid.*, tr. Kangle. p. 80 and note.

[279] On the Vedic deity Vāstoṣpati, see Macdonell, *VM*, p. 138; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 188. The *Gṛhya-sūtras* prescribe offerings to him at the time of entering a new house; *Ibid.*

[280] *Mbh.*, II. 16.38 ff.; 17.1 ff.; also Hopkins, *EM*, p. 41; Banerjea, J.N., "Some Folk Goddesses of Early and Mediaeval India", *IHQ*, XIV, pp. 101 ff.

The *Gṛhya-sūtras* prescribe *bali* offerings to domestic deities under the name Gṛha-devatā;[287] and, since they sometimes mention them with Vāstu-devatā, probably identical with the Vedic Vāstoṣpati, a distinction also seems to be imagined between the two. But it is uncertain whether the Vedic brahmanical tradition had the conception of a tutelary "goddess" of the house. The distinction of being *Gṛha-pati* in the Ṛg-vedic hymns belongs particularly to the fire-god Agni.[288] It is only in the *Atharva-veda* that we once hear of a "pleasant sheltering goddess of the house, the mistress of the dwelling".[289] Considering that this *Veda* is generally regarded as more truly representa-

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281. *Mbh.*, II. 17.1-2a:

 Jarā nāmāsmi bhadraṁ te rākṣasī kāmarūpiṇī,
 Tava veśmani rājendra pūjitā nyavasaṁ sukham. 1
 Sāhaṁ pratyupakārārthaṁ cintayantyaniśaṁ nṛpa,
 …… 2

 About half a dozen verses in the Vulgate editions, which are rejected by the Cr. edn. as interpolations, specifically speak of Jarā as Gṛha-devī, her living regularly in every house, her figures surrounded by numerous children painted on the walls, and regular worship of these figures with scents, flowers, offerings of food, *etc.*; see *Mbh.*, Cr. edn., vol. 2, p. 94, notes *185, *186.

282. *Mbh.*, II. 17.5:

 Tasya bālasya yatkṛtyaṁ taccakāra nṛpastadā,
 Ājñāpayacca rākṣasyā māgadheṣu mahotsavam.

283. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II. 10.23.

284. *Mbh.*, XIII. 103.8; also 101.57, 63; XII. 37.27.

285. *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakram*, ed. Devadhar, p. 195; *Mṛcchakaṭika*, Act I, NSP. edn., pp. 12, 16.

286. *Daśakumāra-carita*, 4th *Ucchvāsa*, NSP. edn., p. 183.

287. In a description of the *Vaiśva-deva* ceremony, the *Āś. GS.*, I. 2.4 contains the statement:

 Etābhyaścaiva devatābhya 'dbhya oṣadhi-vanaspatibhyo gṛhāya
 gṛhadevatābhyo vāstudevatābhyaḥ.

 See also *SBE*, XXIX, p. 161; cf. *Pār. GS.*, II. 9.3.; also *Ibid.*, I. 12.2 (*SBE*, XXIX, pp. 319-20 and 290 respectively).

288. See Macdonell, *VM*, p. 95.

289. *AV*, III. 12. 5:

 Mānasya patni śaraṇā syonā devī devebhirnimitāsyagre,
 Vṛṇaṁ vasānā sumanā asastvamathāsmabhyaṁ sahavīraṁ rayiṁ dāḥ.

 See also *Ibid.*, tr. Bloomfield, *SBE*, XLII, pp. 140, 346; tr. Whitney, vol. I, p. 106. According to Sāyaṇa, the vocative *Mānasya patni* ("mistress of the dwelling") refers to the goddess as *Vāstupateḥ patnī*. Cf. also *AV*, IX. 3.21 (tr. Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, p. 195; tr. Whitney, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 528) which refers to Agni resting in the "mistress of the building" as if in the womb.

tive of the popular traditions,[290] the reference may be significant, although the ritual prescribed in the *Kauśika Sūtra*, while making use of the above hymn in the ceremony of house-building, only refers to the offerings to Vāstoṣpati.[291] In any case, the source of the typical Gṛha-devī or Gṛha-devatā of the epic-Purāṇic times is likely to be outside the Vedic brahmanical tradition, and the story of Jarā in the *Mahābhārata* seems to corroborate it.

In the context of the Gṛha-devatā or Gṛha-devī, a reference may be made also to the Kula-devatā. These also appear to have been sometimes feminine divinities. It has been mentioned above that the river-goddess Gaṅgā was imagined as the tutelary deity of the family of Bhagīratha and Raghu. In the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, Mālatī is compared to the Kula-devatā of Candramā.[292]

Perhaps an indirect indication that several types of deities mentioned in the above pages were goddesses could also be obtained from their description as devatā. The word *devatā* is explained by the Sanskrit grammarians as an abstract substantive, obtained by the addition of the suffix *tā*, in the sense of "-ness", to *deva* and meaning "divinity" or "godhood". In this form, the word is parallel to others like *gurutā*, *amṛtatva*, *etc.*[293] Naturally, therefore, it is used for all kinds of deities, whether male or female. A good example is the expression *vividhā devatā-gaṇāḥ* in *Mbh.*, IX. 44.16, and many others may be cited.[294] In actual usage, however, this word very often refers to a feminine divinity.[295] In the *Mahābhārata*, Draupadī is said to have appeared like a *devatā* to Kīcaka.[296] Several other similar examples may also be given. But the most persuasive evidence is of the labels of deities in the Bharhut reliefs. The goddesses in these reliefs bear only two types of labels, if they are labelled at all. They are either called Yakṣiṇīs or Devatās, such as Ca(ṁ)dā Yakhi(nī), Yakhini Sudasanā, or Sirimā Devatā, Culakokā Devatā, Mahākokā Devatā.[297] On the other hand, no male deity in these reliefs is labelled *devatā*. Hopkins' general impression on the basis of the epic materials that the terms *devatā* is often used for minor deities[298] is quite in agreement with our inference because we believe that a very large number of such deities were feminine. It is no accident, therefore, that the goddesses residing in trees and forests, streams and rivers, or the tutelary goddesses of villages, cities, houses, *etc.*, were called *devatā*. In fact, if the context permits, the word *devatā*, even in its very general usages, is likely to refer to female deities. Thus, the deities in the expression *Anugṛhṇatvenaṁ prasannā devatāḥ*, in the *Mudrā-rākṣasa* of Viśākhadatta, are very probably goddesses, of the type of Gṛha-devī or Kula-devī, since the statement is uttered by a mother for her son.[299]

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[290] See Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, pp. 40-2, 76-7; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 18; Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, I, pt. I, pp. 112-3; etc.

[291] See Karambelkar, *The Atharvavedic Cīvilization*, p. 207.

[292] *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 1st *Ucchvāsa*, p. 15.

[293] See Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar*, p. 476, para 1237; also p. 477, para 1239; Macdonell, *A Sanskrit Grammar for Students*, p. 164.

[294] Cf. the title *Bṛhad-devatā* of the well known Vedic text.

[295] Incidentally, the word, like all abstract nouns ending in *tā*, is of feminine gender; cf. *Amara-koṣa*, p. 3, 1.18:...*daivatāni puṁsi vā devatāh striyām.*

[296] *Mbh.*, IV. 13.4:

> *Tāṁ dṛṣṭvā devagarbhābhāṁ carantīṁ devatāmiva,*
> *Kīcakaḥ kāmayāmāsa kāma-bāṇa-prapīḍitaḥ.*

[297] See Barua and Sinha, *Barhut Inscriptions*, pp. 72-4; Lüders, *Bharhut Inscriptions*, *CII*, II, pt. II, pp. 74, 77-8, 80-1. We have omitted from consideration some other female beings distinctly labelled as *Accharā* (=*Apsarā*, the heavenly dancer) in the scene said to represent the music and dance of the gods; see Barua and Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 ff.; Luders, *op. cit.*, pp. 100 ff. Apparently on the strength of the inscribed labels, Barua imagined the Yakṣiṇīs and Devatās as two distinct types of goddesses (see Barua, *Barhut*, I, p. 62), even though an accurate iconographic distinction between the figures labelled Yakṣiṇīs and those called Devatās is not possible. In his reconstruction of the comprehensive cult of the Yakṣas, Coomaraswamy considered both the terms as having the same connotation (see Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, II, p. 5; I, p. 9). Since the evidence of the inscribed labels cannot be ignored, we feel that Coomaraswamy's suggestion can only be accepted in the sense that both Yakṣiṇīs and Devatās were popular goddesses of somewhat similar types.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE ON GODDESSES

Thus there is impressive literary evidence of very widespread cults of goddesses in our period. Archaeology provides a certain corroboration for this, but, in spite of its obvious advantages in terms of actual practice and relatively easier reference to a time—space framework,[300] it has also its own limitations, especially in respect of the reconstruction of the concepts and cults of deities.[301] Compared to literary texts, archaeology can provide only very limited information, and it may not be able to enlighten us about many popular deities and their cults otherwise attested by literature. It is possible that many popular goddesses were not worshipped in iconic form at all, or were worshipped only in the form of crude or temporary symbols which are no longer available or not identifiable. Moreover, many may have never achieved a following wide and influential enough to necessitate large, permanent shrines and icons. It is also possible that some quite popular deities had chiefly domestic and private cults, giving little opportunity for large shrines or icons, and therefore there was little need for inscriptions recording their dedication. But our fuller use of the archaeological material is also handicapped because, except in the case of inscribed records and to a certain extent coins, these materials are not easily accessible and adequate comprehensive surveys of them are not available. There is yet another difficulty in respect of the sculptural material, including terracottas. While it is true that a properly identified figure, especially if it is known to have been an icon for worship, provides the best evidence of the cult of a deity, such accurate identifications are not always available. The early figures with which we are generally concerned belong to a stage of emergent iconography when the forms of deities were only gradually being standardized.[302] The

[298] See Hopkins, *EM*, p. 57.

[299] *Mudrā-rākṣasa*, ed. Kale, p. 346.

[300] While this remark is generally true, the terracotta materials (see below) present serious problems of dating.

[301] Cf. the comments by Wheeler on the limitations of the archaeological materials for reconstructing the religious beliefs of the Indus Valley people; Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 108. These comments are made in relation to a chalcolithic culture, but the same caution is needed in handling archaeological material of any period without adequate literary corroboration.

[302] This is fully borne out by *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art* by Agrawala; see, however, his comments on pp. v and vii; also Codrington, K. de B., "Iconography: Classical and Indian", *Man*, XXXV, May 1935, pp. 65-6; Agrawala, *Indian Art*, p. 316. For Coomaraswamy's general comments on the evolution of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina iconographic types following the Maurya-Śuṅga Yakṣa models, see *Yakṣas*, I, p. 29.

difficulties are almost insuperable in the case of terracotta figures where there is only the minimum of iconographic differentiation. It is only when the terracottas approximate to the stone sculptures and achieve a more or less conventional from that a specific identification becomes more certain.[303]

With the above limitations in mind, we may make a rapid survey of the archaeological materials for evidence of goddess cults in our period. The inscribed records are dealt with first because they are not only more definitely placed in time and space but also provide fuller information and often names. An inscription of the early Kuṣāṇa period from Mathura suggesting the cult of a village goddess, and another, of the same period from the same place, possibly referring to the cult of a goddess called Āryavatī have been mentioned above. Omitting a few inscriptions which belong to the later phases of our period and may be related in one way or the other with the cult of the Great Goddess,[304] there are several attesting the cults of independent goddesses, or goddesses of local or special nature. Thus an inscription on a fragmentary marble statue from Nagarjunikonda and dateable, approximately, to the third century A.D., brings to light a nude squatting goddess whose cult, from the distribution of her figures in terracotta and stone, would seem to have been popular in North India and the Deccan during our period.[305] The early fifth century A.D. inscription from Gaṅgdhār (western Madhya Pradesh) refers to the shrine of the Mātṛs, to the association of these deities with the Dākinīs and to the rites of worship in this shrine;[306] and from slightly later dates come two other inscriptions, one from the same general area and the other from Bihar, referring to these deities.[307] The early Kadamba and Cālukya records testify that these "Mothers" were accepted as the tutelary deities of those dynasties.[308] Three copper plate inscriptions of the 6th century A.D. from Khoh (Madhya Pradesh), issued by the Parivrājaka Mahārājas, refer to land grants for worship and repairs in the shrine of a goddess Piṣṭapurī or Piṣṭapurikā,[309] who is sometimes believed to be a form of Śrī-Lakṣmī,[310] but who may have been a local goddess and who probably bore some relationship to Piṣṭapura in South India, which is mentioned in the Allahabad Praśasti of Samudragupta.[311]

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303. The approximation of terracotta material to stone sculptures and the evolution of iconographic types in terracotta, though in evidence also in earlier periods, was not fully achieved before the Gupta period; see Codrington, K. de B., "Some Indian Terracotta Figurines", *IA*, August 1931, p. 143; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, "The Terracotta Art of India", *Mārg*, XXIII, no. 1, Dec. 1969, pp. 43, 47; see also below.
304. These are discussed below, in Ch. II.
305. Narasimhaswamy, H.K., "Nāgārjunikoṇḍa Image Inscription", *EI*, XXIX, pp. 137 ff. For the cult of the nude squatting goddess, see below, Ch. IV.
306. Fleet, "Gaṅgdhār Stone Inscription of Viśvavarman, *etc*.," *CII*., III, pp. 72 ff.; see also below, Ch. III.
307. Sahni, Daya Ram, "Deogarh Rock Inscription of Svāmibhaṭa", *EI*, XVIII, pp. 125 ff.; Fleet, "Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription, *etc*.," *CII*., III, pp. 47 ff.; also Sircar, *Sel. Ins*., I, pp. 325 ff. For the cult of the Mātṛs, see below, Ch. III. The Bihar inscription also refers to a goddess Bhadrāryā.
308. See below, Ch. III.
309. See Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 112 ff., 129 ff. and 135 ff.; also Sircar, *Sel. Ins*., I, pp. 394 ff.
310. See Fleet, *op. cit*., pp. 113, 130.
311. *Ibid*., p. 113, fn. 2; cf. also Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, pp. 106-7.

A copper plate grant of Droṇasiṁha of the opening of the 6th century A.D. records the gift of the village Trisaṅgamaka in Hastivapra for regular worship and repairs in the shrine of a goddess Pāṇḍurājyā or Pāṇḍurājā, apparently a local deity of some importance.[312] Trisaṅgamaka and Hastivapra of the grant are identified with Tārsamia and Hathab in modern Kathiawad, Gujarat.[313] A grant of the Valabhi king Dhruvasena II of the 7th century A.D. associates the name of Droṇasiṁha with another goddess at the same place. According to this charter, Droṇasiṁha is said to have made a grant in favour of goddess Koṭṭamahikā, and, as this had become inoperative for some time, Dhruvasena II confirmed it and issued an order for its use in regular worship and repairs in the shrine of the goddess.[314] This goddess Koṭṭamahikā seems to be identical with Korravai of the Tamil literature and Koṭavī—Koṭarī—Koṭarā of the epic and the *Purāṇas*.[315] The boundary demarcation in another Valabhi grant of the same period seems to refer to the shrine of a goddess Śaṅkarikā, who may be the well known Durgā–Ambikā or, more probably, a local goddess regarded as one of her forms.[316]

Two inscriptions from Rajasthan, assigned to the 7th century A.D., refer to the shrine of the goddess Araṇya-vāsinī and to the goddess Vasundharā.[317] Another inscription of the same period from the erstwhile Jodhpur State refers to the shrine of a goddess Dadhimatī (*sic.*) and to contributions raised by certain Dadhya brāhmaṇas, probably in connection with the shrine or the cult of the goddess.[318] Since the inscription was discovered in a temple dedicated to a goddess locally known as Dadhamatamātājī and since the community of Dāhimā brāhmaṇas living in the village surrounding the temple regard this goddess as their Kula-devī, it has been reasonably suggested that the modern goddess is the same as the one referred to in the inscription and that the Dāhimā brāhmaṇas of today are the descendants of their ancient Dadhya ancestors. Thus the inscription is remarkable as evidence of long continuity of the cult of a local or family goddess.[319] The specific mention of a community of brāhmaṇa votaries would suggest that the cult of Dadhimatī was already affected by the learned tradition. In any case, as the inscription seems to reproduce a verse contained in the *Devī-māhātmya*,[320] it is quite clear that the goddess Dadhimatī was imagined as having a status higher than a that of simple local or family deity, and that she was regarded as identical with or a form of the Great Goddess.

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[312] See Jackson, A.M.T., "Two New Valabhī Copper Plates", *JBBRAS*, XX, 1897-1900, pp. 1 ff.; Barnett, Lionel D., "Bhamodrā Mohotā Plate of Droṇasiṁha: the year 183", *EI*, XVI, pp. 17 ff.; Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, I, pp. 426 ff.

[313] See Jackson, *op. cit.*, *JBBRAS*, XX, 1897-1900, pp. 1-2.

[314] *Ibid.*, pp. 6 ff.

[315] For the cult of the goddess Koṭavī, see below, Ch. V.

[316] Diskalkar, D.B., "Two Un-published Valabhī Grants", *EI*, XXI, pp. 179 ff. (See Bhavanagar Plates of Dharasena III, of Valabhī year 304). The reference to the goddess comes in the line 34 of the grant as:

grāmīṇa-nirmmita-śaṅkarikāryyā[*parataḥ*].

[317] See Agrawala, R.C., "Goddess Worship in Ancient Rājasthāna, *etc*."., *JBRS*, XLI, pt. I, March 1955, pp. 7-8.

[318] Ram Karna, "Dadhimatī-mātā Inscription of the time of Dhrūhlāṇa, *etc*.," *EI.*, XI, pp. 299 ff.; also Bhandarkar, D.R., "Epigraphic Notes and Questions: VI, The Date of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*", *JBBRAS*, XXIII, 1909-14, pp. 73-4.

[319] Nitya Nanda has tried to trace the antiquity of Dadhimātī to the early Vedic period; see *Dadhīci Number of Dadhimātī*, Aug. 1952, pp. 4-5, as cited in Agrawala, *op. cit.*, (fn. 351 above), *JBRS*, XLI, 1955, p. 6 and fn. 1. We have not been able to see the article by Nitya Nanda, but, to our knowledge, there is no mention of a goddess called Dadhimaṭī in the Vedic, epic or early Purāṇic texts.

It may be added that there is inscriptional evidence of royal devotees of a goddess called Stambheśvarī in Orissa in the 6th century A.D.[321] In the 10th century A.D., the same goddess was accepted as a family deity by the Śulkis ruling over the Dhenkanal area. It has been suggested that she may have been originally an aboriginal deity, and is probably related to the modern cult of wooden pillars at the corners of aboriginal villages in Orissa. Some temples of this goddess have also been noted and she seems to be worshipped in the modern times under the name Khambheśvarī.[322] Finally, a goddess Kiraṇeśvarī seems to be mentioned in several short epigraphs of approximately 7th-8th century A.D. in the Pabhosa Caves near Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh.[323]

GODDESSES ON COINS AND SEALS

Gods and goddesses also appear frequently on coins and seals and this has often been utilized in the reconstruction of their cults.[324] Since the choice of deities or their symbols as coin-or seal-devices would normally be deliberate and meaningful, this can be taken as evidence of the importance of the deities concerned and the popularity of their cults, but a certain margin may have to be left for the conservatism and continuity of numismatic traditions, the peculiar suitability of a particular deity as a device on coins and seals,[325] *etc.* The pantheon represented on the Kuṣāṇa coins and seals has been independently studied by several authors.[326] A fairly full survey of the representations of Indian deities on early Indian coins and seals is made by Banerjea, even though his approach is mainly conographical.[327] He has generally omitted particular discussion of the coin-series of the Imperial Guptas, mainly because he deals with the numismatic and glyptic materials in relation to the origin and evolution of iconography in India, but perhaps also because the material on the Gupta coins has been independently studied. All this information provides some corroborative evidence for the popularity of certain goddesses in our period.

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[320] See Ram Karna, *op. cit.*, *EI*, XI, pp. 300, 302; also comments by Sten Konow in *Ibid.*, p. 303, fn. 1. The *Devī-māhātmya* verse appearing in the inscription and its implications are discussed below, in Ch. II.

[321] See Sircar, D.C., "Terāsinghā Plates of Tuṣṭikāra", *EI.*, XXX, pp. 274 ff.

[322] *Ibid.*, p. 276.

[323] See Bühler, G., "Further Pabhosā Inscriptions", *EI*, II, pp. 481-2.

[324] As an instance, see Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, pp. 94-5, where the appearances of Śrī-Lakṣmī on the early Indian coins have been used to reconstruct the history of the cult of the goddess.

[325] See below.

[326] We should like to mention particularly Stein, M. Aurel, "Zoroastrian Deities on Indo-Scythian Coins", *IA*, April 1888, pp. 89 ff.; Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Art of the Kushans*, pp. 69 ff.; Chattopadhyaya, *The Age of the Kushāṇas—A Numismatic Study*, pp. 144 ff.

[327] See Banerjea, J.N., "Indian Elements in the Coin Devices of the Early Foreign Rulers of India", *IHQ*, XIV, 1938, pp. 293 ff.; and esp. *DHI*, ch. IV, pp. 108 ff., and ch. V, esp. pp. 177 ff.

Without going into the merits of individual identifications, which are sometimes quite doubtful, the following observations may be made about the appearance of certain goddesses on coins and seals. Since the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmi is one of those Indian deities who achieved a distinctive iconographic form very early,[328] and apparently also because, being a goddess of good luck and prosperity, she was particularly suited as a coin-device,[329] she makes a very early appearance on coins and her figures are often unmistakable. The most characteristic form of Śrī-Lakṣmī is the *abhiṣeka* motif in which, seated or standing, she is bathed by an elephant on either side,[330] and the motif appears, with some variations, already on an un-inscribed coin from Kauśāmbī assigned to the 3rd century B.C.,[331] on un-inscribed coins of Ujjayinī dated between the 3rd and 2nd century B.C.,[332] on a coin of Sujyeṣṭha identified with a Śuṅga king,[333] and on those of several Ayodhya kings, all dated in the 2nd-1st century B.C.[334] It was adopted also by the Śaka rulers Azilises, Rājuvula and Śodāṣa.[335] Further, it appears on several official and private terracotta sealings from Basārh and Bhīṭā, all dated in the Gupta period,[336] and also on seals attached to the copper plate grants of certain feudatories of the Imperial Guptas and kings ruling in the later and post-Gupta periods.[337] Although Śaśāṅka appears to have been a devotee of Śiva, the reverses of his gold coins show the *abhiṣeka* motif.[338] Some base gold coins of comparable date, bearing the legend *Jaya*, also contain a variant of the same.[339]

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[328] Cf. Coomaraswamy, Ananda K., "Early Indian Iconography: II. Śrī-Lakṣmī", *Eastern Art*, I, no. 3, January 1929, p. 183.

[329] Cf. Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 111-2.

[330] Foucher's opinion that this motif, when appearing on early Buddhist monuments, represents Buddha's nativity should be abandoned; for criticism of Foucher's opinion, see Coomaraswamy's review of *On the Iconography of the Buddha's Nativity* by Foucher in *IHQ*, XI, no. 2, June 1935, pp. 357 ff.

[331] Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*, p. 74 and pl. V. 9; Allan, *BMC*, *AI*, pp. xcv, 149, pl. XX. 15; Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 110.

[332] Allan, *BMC*, *AI*, pp. cxliv-cxlv. 256, pls. XVIII. 24, XXXVI. 4-5; Benerjea, *DHI*, p. 110.

[333] Ghose, Ajit, *JNSI*, XVI, pp. 59-60, as cited in Jaiswal, *op. cit.*, p. 94, fn. 8.

[334] Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 92, pl. IX. 6; Allan, *BMC*, *AI*, pp. lxxxviii-lxxxix, 131, 133, pls. XVI. 14-5, XVII. 8, XLIII. 4-5; Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 110.

[335] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 10; Jenkins and Narain, *The Coin-types of the Śaka-Pahlava Kings of India*, pp. 9, 30-1.

[336] See Bloch, T., "Excavations at Basarh", *ASI-AR*, 1903-04, pp. 106-10, seal types nos. 3-7, 8-13, 20-23, 26: Marshall, "Excavations at Bhīṭā", *ASI-AR*, 1911-2, pp. 47, 52-4, seal types nos. 32, 34-5, 42; see also Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 193 ff.

[337] See Fleet, *CII.*, III, pp. 191, 196 and pls. XXVI, XXVII for seals of the kings of Śarabhapura dynasty. For some other instances, see Pargiter, F.E., "Three Copper Plate Grants from East Bengal", *IA*, July 1910, pp. 194, 199: Basak, Radhagovind, "Tipperah Copper Plate Grant of Lokanātha", *EI*, XV, p. 302 and pl.

[338] See Allan, *BMC*, *GD*, pp. cv, 147, pl. XXIII. 14-6.

[339] *Ibid.*, pp. civ, 150-1, pl. XXIV. 6, 8.

Without the benefit of the anointing elephants and purely through her association with the lotus, the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmi is recognized also on several other local and tribal coins dateable from the 2nḍ century B.C. to 1st century A.D.,[340] on certain coins of Azes II and Hagāmaṣa,[341] and on the obverse of those coins of Rājuvula and Śodāṣa which show the *abhiṣeka* motif on the reverse.[342] The so-called "dancing girl" on some coins of the Indo-Greek kings Pantaleon and Agathocles[343] and, as we have seen, the "city deity" of Puṣkalāvatī have also been identified as possible representations of Śrī-Lakṣmī. These identifications are naturally much less certain that those of the *abhiṣeka* motif. Sometimes alternative identifications with Durgā, Ambikā, Ekānaṁśā, *etc.*, have also been suggested.[344]

The goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī does not appear on the Kuṣāṇa coins and seals, but, as is well known, occupies a prominent place on the gold coin-series of the Imperial Guptas, and it is generally believed that her iconography in the series has been strongly influenced by the Ardokhsho type of the Kuṣāṇa coins.[345]

The identifications of Durgā, Ambikā, Gaurī, Ekānaṁśā, *etc.* on early Indian coins as suggested by Banerjea are only of the doubtful kind.[346] His suggestions, however, though not certain, carry relatively greater conviction when other symbols on the coins betray a definite Śivaite association. Thus the female figure standing on a lotus and holding a flower in her right hand, with possibly a lion beside it, as depicted on the obverse of a coin-type of Azes II, could represent Śiva's consort, since the reverse also shows a humped bull which is a well known emblem of Śiva.[347] It has sometimes been suggested that the lion-riding goddess on the Candragupta-Kumāradevī coins and the Lion-slayer type of Candragupta II represents Durgā-Ambikā.[348] But the

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340. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 111, fn. 1.
341. Jenkins and Narain, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 29.
342. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-1.
343. See Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 182; also Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 111.
344. See Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 111, 133 ff., 154-5.
345. See Smith, Vincent A., "The Coinage of the Early or Imperial Gupta Dynasty, *etc.*," *JRAS*, 1889, pp. 13, 24 ff.; Allan, *BMC*, *GD*, Index V, s.v. Lakṣmī, and pp. xxviii, xxxiv, lxx-lxxii; Altekar, *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, pp. 15, 21; also Das Gupta, C.C., "Some Notes on the Iconography of Lakṣmī", *Bhāratīya Vidyā*, XV, no. 3, pp. 61 ff.
346. Cf. esp. Banerjea, *DHI.*, pp. 154-5.
347. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-5; also Gardner, *BMC*, *Gr. Scy.*, pp. lix, 85, pl. XIX. 5; Jenkins and Narain, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
348. See Allan, *BMC*, *GD*, pp. lxxiii-lxxiv, lxxxiii; Altekar, *op. cit.* pp. 27, 31-2, 106; Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 135. It has been suggested that this Gupta device represents a specific iconographic form of Śrī-Lakṣmī, the Siṁhavāhinī Lakṣmī, which is described by Hemādri and whose representations are seen in the temples of Khajuraho; see Dikshit, R.K., "Siṁhavāhinī Lakṣmī", *JNSI*, XXVI, pp. 102 ff. This, in our opinion, does not solve the problem of the coin-device under reference, because there is no early evidence of the association of Śrī-Lakṣmī with the lion. The concept of the Lion-riding Lakṣmī, which is attested only by late evidence, should normally be explained as evolved under the influence of Durgā-Ambikā, especially as there was mutual give and take in concepts of these goddesses; see Hartmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmī*, ch. 7, esp. pp. 38 ff. But whether this influence is already in evidence in the Gupta coin devices remains a moot point; cf. Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

force of the Gupta numismatic tradition has not permitted scholars to abandon identification with Śri-Lakṣmī.[349] On the other hand, the unique stater of Huviṣka, now in the British Museum, shows on the reverse both Śiva and his consort. The name of the goddess in Greek characters was first read as *Ommo* by Rapson who inferred that it referred to the Indian goddess *Umā*, and the reading as well as the identification are now generally accepted, with few dissentient opinions.[350] Benerjea has read the same legend *Ommo* on another stater piece of Huviṣka, on which, however, the female figure holds a cornucopiae instead of flower.[351] It may be added that Durgā riding a lion or killing a buffalo demon appears on the Nalanda seals of the later Gupta and early mediaeval periods.[352]

A few other Indian deities have also been identified on early Indian coins. A reference has been made above to the possible representation of Ṣaṣṭhī on a coin-type of the Yaudheyas. The female figure standing on a lotus on the reverse of Bhadraghoṣa's coins (Pañcāla Mitra series), which conforms to the type of Śrī-Lakṣmī, was early identified by Allan as Bhadrā, on the basis of the name of the issuer.[353] On the same basis, he also identified a similar figure on the coins of Pañcāla Phalgunīmitra as the asterism Phalguni,[354] although, as Banerjea has pointed out, the Pūrva and Uttara Phalgunis described in the late compilation by Hemādri are very different goddesses.[355] The same author has identified Yakṣa-Yakṣiṇī couples on some Ujjayini coins,[356] and it may be added that, often as alternatives to identifications with Śrī-Lakṣmī, Yakṣīs have been recognized tentatively on certain Indo-Greek and Śaka-Pahlava coins.[357] A few unidentified goddesses appear on terracotta sealings of the Gupta period from Rajghat, Uttar Pradesh,[358] and the name of the goddess Sarasvatī occurs in the legend on a Gupta sealing from Bhīṭā.[359]

In the context of appearances of Indian goddesses on coins and seals, it must also be noted that the coin-series of the foreign rulers in India introduce a large number of alien goddesses. Apart from several unidentified figures, some of which, as we have seen, are simply labelled as city-deities, the figures of Artemis, Athena (Pallas), Demeter, Hekate, Nike, Tyche, *etc.*, are recognized on the coins of the Indo-Greeks, Scythians and Parthians.[360] The most important foreign goddesses to appear on the

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349. See Allan and Altekar, cited in the preceding foot-note.
350. See Rapson, *JRAS*, 1897, pp. 322-4; Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 126; Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, pp. 94-5, where the dissent of Robert Göbl is also cited; also Chattopadhyay, *The Age of the Kushāṇas, etc.*, pp. 166, 177.
351. Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 126-7.
352. *Ibid.*, pp. 185 ff.
353. Allan, *BMC, AI*, pp. cxvii-cxviii; also Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 133.
354. Allan, *op. cit.*, p. cxviii.
355. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 133.
356. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-1.
357. See Narain, *The Coin-types of the Indo-Greek Kings*, pp. 7-8; Jenkins and Narain, *The Coin-types of the Śaka-Pahlava Kings*, p. 2.
358. See Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 198.
359. See Marshall, "Excavations at Bhīṭā", *ASI-AR*, 1911-12, p. 50.
360. See Lahiri, *Corpus of Indo-Greek Coins*, p. 27; also Gardner, *BMC, Gr. Scy.*, pp. lvi ff.

Kuṣāṇa coins are Nana and Ardokhsho.[361] Since it has been frequently noted that the foreign rulers tended to identify their own deities with the local ones,[362] the phenomenon should be regarded as of considerable significance for the history of the goddess cults in our period, particularly as the influence of some alien goddesses on the Indian goddess concepts is clearly indicated.[363]

The limitations of sculptural materials as evidence of religious cults have been noted above. As corroborative evidence of the popularity of goddess cults, we will only utilize the products of the Mathura school of art, whose flourishing period generally coincides with the period of our investigation and which also appears to have been the centre where the Indian iconography started taking shape.[364] In his catalogue of the brahmanical images in Mathura art, Agrawala lists the stone figures, of the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods, of such goddesses as Śrī-Lakṣmī;[365] Durgā-Pārvatī, usually identified, in the case of the early figures, with the help of the lion-mount;[366] Pārvatī performing *tapaścaryā* in the midst of fire;[367] Durgā-mahiṣamardinī;[368] the so-called Mātṛkās, in a very evolutionary stage of iconography in the Kuṣāṇa period;[369] the goddess Vasudhārā, associated with jars and fish;[370] the well known Buddhist goddess Hārītī, characterized by the child in her arms;[371] and the goddess Bhadrā, holding a fruit, in a complex iconographic composition, now in the Lucknow Museum, which also includes Śrī-Lakṣmī on lotus, Hārītī holding a child and Kubera.[372] He also lists figures of

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[361] See Stein, M. Aurel, "Zoroastrian Deities on Indo-Scythian Coins", *IA*, April 1888, pp. 97-8; Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, pp. 72, 74-5, 83 ff.; also Chattopadhyay, *The Age of the Kushāṇas, etc.*, pp. 164 ff., and 167 ff. B.N. Mukherjee has made an exhaustive study of the coin-types depicting the goddess Nanā seated on a lion, in his *Nanā on Lion—A Study in Kuṣāṇa Numismatic Art*; see especially Chs. II & V.

[362] Cf. Rapson (ed.) *The Cambridge History of India*, p. 557; Lahiri, *op. cit.*, p. 27; Rosenfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 88, *etc.*; Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 155.

[363] E.G., the influence of the Ardokhsho type of Kuṣāṇa coins on the iconography of Śrī-Lakṣmī on the coin-series of the Guptas.

[364] See Agrawala, *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art*, pp. v, vii; Codrington, K. de B., "Iconography: Classical and Indian", *Man*, XXXV, May 1935, pp. 65-6; Saraswati, *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, pp. 62-3; Goetz, *India: Five Thousand Years of Indian Art*, p. 80; *etc.*, On the significance of Mathura, especially as the centre of a flourishing school of art, see also Fabri, C.L., "Mathura of the Gods", *Mārg*, 7, no. 2, 1954, pp. 8 ff., and Codrington, K. de B., "Mathura of the Gods", *Ibid.*, 9, no. 2, 1956, pp. 41 ff.

[365] Agrawala, *op. cit.*, pp, 48 ff.

[366] *Ibid.*, pp. 51 ff.

[367] *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 53-4.

[368] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[369] *Ibid.*, pp. 59 ff.

[370] Agrawala, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-5. On Vasudhārā, see also by the same author, "Mathura Terracottas" *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, July 1936, pp. 29-30; "Vasudhārā", *JISOA*, VII, 1939, pp. 13 ff.; and "Terracotta Figurines of Ahichchhatrā, *etc.*," *AI*, 4, 1947-48, p. 123.

[371] Agrawala, *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art*, pp. 88 ff. There are a large number of figures of Hārītī with Kubera; see *Ibid.*, pp. 80 ff.

[372] *Ibid.*, p. x.

Nāginis.[373] Most of these are modest relief compositions, and, with the possible exception of some figures of Hārītī and the Nāginīs, are scarcely more than a foot in height. They cannot, therefore, be uniformly assumed to have been cult images, and many may have served a largely decorative purpose in a bigger edifice which was the shrine of another deity. But their representations and, in most cases, the frequency of their appearance are clearly a proof of their popularity.

The above are more or less definitely identified figures. Several Kuṣāṇa figures of a goat-headed goddess with different attributes in her hands and often holding a child, sometimes raising the right hand in *abhaya-mudrā* and having a halo round the head, have been identified as the female counterpart of the god Naigameṣa, who may have been originally connected with the cult of Skanda-Kārttikeya but who is known to have occupied a prominent position in the Jaina tradition.[374] The are, however, a large number of other female figures from Mathura, some of whom, on account of their prominent head-dresses, their association with trees or children, and their general iconographic appearance, are very likely to represent goddesses, especially as in the case of some examples the right hand appears to have been raised in *abhaya mudrā*, but it is not possible to supply their names.[375] A special mention may be made here of the large number of charming, semi-nude females which decorated the Jaina and Buddhist stūpas at Mathura during the Kuṣāṇa period.[376] Some of these figures may represent ordinary women, but a large majority are apparently deities, Yakṣiṇis, Devatās, Vṛkṣakās, Apsarases or popular fertility goddesses of some kind, and must be related to their named and unnamed ancestresses on the railing pillars of the Bharhut stūpa and the unnamed goddesses of the crude terracottas. They almost seem to disappear from the monuments of the Gupta period, apparently because they were gradually being absorbed in the growing cult of the Great Goddess as seen for instance in the *Devīmāhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.[377]

In an account of popular religion, the terracotta materials may be expected to produce valuable evidence, the more so as the Indo-Gangetic plain is particularly rich in them. But the value of this evidence is drastically limited for the reasons already noted. There is not only the lack of adequate comprehensive surveys and serious difficulties of identifications, but also the additional difficulty of accurate chronological arrangement. This has often been done on purely stylistic considerations which are not a sure guide. To take two instances, a certain type of terracotta female figurines from the North-western Frontier regions were assigned to as early as the 2nd millennium B.C. on the grounds of their archaic appearance, *etc.*, but the Chārsadda excavations have

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373. Agrawala *A Catalogue of the Bramanical Images in Mathura Art*, pp. 88 ff. There are a large number of figures of Hārītī with Kubera; See *Ibid.*, pp. 80 ff. pp. 101-2, 104-5.

374. See Agrawala, *Mathura Museum Catalogue*, pt. III, pp. 33-4; cf. also *Mbh*, III. 217. 11.

375. See Agrawala, *Mathura Museum Catalogue*, pt. III, pp. 53 ff.; *Ibid.*, pt. IV, pp. 125-6.

376. See Coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, pp. 64-5; by the same author, *Yakṣas*, I, pp. 32-3; Ray, Nihar Ranjan, in Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 523-4; Saraswati, *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, pp. 68-9.

377. Cf. Goetz, H., "Aphrodite Urania: An Asiatic Cult in Ancient Greece, and a Corinthian Bronze in the Baroda Museum", *BBMPG*, III, pt. II, 1946 (1948), p. 13.

proved that they cannot be dated before 300 B.C.[378] Similarly, although certain archaic-looking terracotta female figures from Mathura were generally assigned to such age brackets as "early" and "pre-Maurya", the Ahicchatrā excavations do not permit the dating of similar materials earlier than 300 B.C.[379] It may also be added that according to the chronological sequence generally agreed upon figures with bodies modelled by hand and head pressed from a mould in the Mauryan period were followed by completely moulded plaques in the Śuṅga period, and these in turn were followed by fully modelled figures again in the Kuṣāṇa period.[380] This sequence, though workable, is not fool-proof. It is possible to imagine that several different techniques were sometimes used in the same period. The Kuṣāṇa period also shows some evidence of the use of moulds and both modelling by hand and pressing from moulds were employed by the Gupta artists.[381]

In the face of the above difficulties, we will confine ourselves only to a few very general remarks pertinent to our discussion.[382] Leaving a side the terracotta

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378. See Coomaraswamy, Ananda, "Archaic Indian Terracottas", *Mārg*, VI, no. 2, pp. 24-7 (reprint of article originally published in *IPEK*, 1928, pp. 64 ff.); Gordon, D.H., "Some Terracottas from Sari Dheri, North-west Frontier Province", *JRAI*, LXII, 1932, pp. 163 ff.; and by the same author, "Notes on Early Frontier Terracottas", *Man* XXXIV, 1934, pp. 55 ff.; "The Problem of Early Indian Terracottas", *Ibid.*, XXXV, 1935, pp. 117-8; "The Mother-Goddess of Gandhara", *Antiquity*, XI, 1937, pp. 70 ff.; "The Age of Frontier Terracottas", *Iraq*, V, 1938, pp. 85 ff.; Corbiau, Simone, "Indian and Babylonian Figurines", *Man*, XXXV, 1935, p. 144; and by the same author, "New Finds in the Indus Valley", *Iraq*, IV, 1937, pp. 1 ff.; "Prehistoric Remains on the Historic Sites of India and the Near East", *Man*, XXXVII, 1937, pp. 150 ff.; Das Gupta, C.C., "The Problem of Ancient Indian Terracottas", *IHQ*, XII, 1936, pp. 138 ff.; Wheeler, *Chārsada, etc.*, pp. 104 ff., where the nickname "Baroque ladies" has been given to these figures; also Sankalia, H.D. and Dhavalikar, M.K., "The Terracotta Art, of India", *Mārg*", XXIII, no. 1, 1969, p. 39.

379. See Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, *Mārg*, VI, no. 2, pp. 27 ff.; Agrawala, Vasudeva S., "Mathurā Terracottas", *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, 1936, pp. 10-1, 13 ff.; also by the same author, "Terracotta Figurines of Ahichchhatrā, Dist. Bareilly, U.P.", *AI*, 4, 1847-48, pp. 106-7.

380. See generally Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, *Mārg*, VI, no. 2, pp. 24 ff.; Agrawala, *op. cit.*, *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, 1936, pp. 10-2, 28; Kramrisch. S., "Indian Terracottas," *JISOA*, VII, 1939, pp. 89 ff.; esp. 104-5; Gordon, D.H., "Early Indian Terracottas", *JISOA*, XI, 1943, pp. 144-5, 151, 190-1; Ray, Nihar Ranjan, in Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 532; Saraswati, *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, pp. 98, 99, 102-3, 107, 109; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, *op. cit.*, *Mārg*, XXIII, no. 1, pp. 40, 43, 45, 47; *etc.* It may be added that since certain hand-modelled, crude figures appear at all times and from all sites, defying any classification by style or technique, the somewhat irritating name of "ageless" or "timeless" type has been invented for them; see Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, pp. 89 ff.; Ray, *op. cit.*, pp. 531-2; Saraswati, *op. cit.*, pp. 99 ff.

381. The limitations of the chronological sequence of the terracotta materials on the basis of technique of manufacture and exceptions are noted by nearly all the authorities cited above.

382. For the comments on the terracotta female figurines presented here, the following general or specialized surveys may be especially seen: Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas", *Mārg*, VI, no. 2, pp. 24 ff.; Agrawala, Vasudeva S., "Mathurā Terracottas", *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, 1936, pp. 6 ff; by the same author, "Terracotta Figurines of Ahichchhatrā, *etc.*," *AI*, 4, 1947-48, pp. 104 ff.; Kramrisch, S., "Indian Terracottas", *JISOA*, VII, 1939, pp. 89 ff.; Gordon, D.H., "Early Indian Terracottas", *Ibid.*, XI, 1943, pp. 136 ff.; Saraswati, *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, ch. V, pp. 96 ff.; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, "The Terracotta Art of India',, *Mārg*, XXIII, no. 1, 1969,

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female figures from the pre-Harappan village cultures in the Baluchistan hills and the various sites of the Harappa Culture,[383] as also those that have been brought to light from several post-Harappan chalcolithic cultures in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra,[384] it may be said that there is a more or less connected or continuous history of terracotta art in the Indo-Gangetic plain from approximately the Mauryan to the Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods. There also seems to be a general agreement that, as far as human figures are concerned, the so-called "mother goddess" figures predominate in the earlier periods, (Mauryan and, perhaps, slightly earlier) after which, with advanced techniques of manufacture and greater freedom in the handling of the material, a wide variety of subjects, both religious and secular, is represented in the Śuṅga period, and, amongst the religious figures, specific deities start becoming identifiable. The better of the terracotta pieces also gradually approximate to the products in stone, and, by the Gupta period, large terracotta plaques showing complex compositions are used to adorn shrines.

Although a precise identification should remain doubtful, it may be conceded that the early terracotta female figurines, assignable to the Mauryan or a slightly earlier period[385] and roughly approximating in form to the standing figures on the gold leaf plaques from Lauria-nandangarh and Piprahwa[386] suggest their divinity by their apparent

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pp. 33 ff.; also Das Gupta, C.C., "Bibliography of Ancient Indian Terracotta Figurines" *JRASB, L,* IV, 1938, pp. 67 ff.; and by the same author, *Origin and Evolution of Indian Clay Sculpture*, esp. chs. III-VII. This last work, though purporting to be a comprehensive survey of the terracotta materials from Pre-historic to Mediaeval times, has not proved as helpful to us as expected because observations of religious significance in it are too general. In our opinion, while the work is of considerable bibliographical interest, the author does not fully justify his claim (see *Ibid.*, Preface, p. iii) to throw light on the history and evolution of the religious and iconographical arts of India.

383. For the terracotta figurines of pre-Harappan village cultures in Baluchistan hills and those from the Indus Valley sites, see Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 49 ff.; 338 ff., Piggott *Prehistoric India*, pp. 107 ff., 128 ff., 203; Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, pp. 91-2, 109.

384. See Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op. cit., *Mārg*, XXIII, no. 1, 1969, pp. 37 ff. .

385. We include in this category both the early female figures from sites in the Gandhara region, the so-called "Baroque ladies", as well as the figures from sites like Mathura which were assigned to "early" and "pre-Maurya" periods. The description of their characteristics presented here should be regarded as a very general one. In themselves, they differ in general style and many details, the one important element of difference being that while the Gandharan figures are nude, the mount of Venus is concealed by a heavy girdle in those from Mathura. There are some Śuṅga specimens, however, in which the sex is conspicuously depicted in spite of the suggestion of a covering lower garment, somewhat in the fashion of the females on the railing pillars of the Kuṣāṇa period from Mathura; see Coomaraswamy, op. cit., *Mārg*, VI, no. 2, p. 30 and fig. 43. It may be added that recent excavations of some Painted Grey Ware sites, as at Jakhera (Dist. Etah, U.P.) and Khalaua (Dist. Agra), have also yielded human figurines, see *Man and Environment,* II, 1978, p. 103 and *Ind. Archaeology 1965-66-A Review* (1973), p. 42. But these evidences are rather exceptional and it is also uncertain whether they all represent mother goddesses.

386. For the respoussé figures on gold leaves from Lauria-nandangarh and Piprahwa, see Bloch, T., "Excavations at Lauria", *ASI-AR*, 1906-7, pp. 122 ff. and 124, fn. 3; Majumdar, N.G., "Explorations at Lauria-nandangarh", *ibid.*, 1935-36, pp. 59-60 and pl. XXIII. a, b. Bloch's identification of the figure as the Vedic deity Pṛthivī is purely speculative; see Coomaraswamy, op. cit., *Mārg* VI, no. 2,

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nudity, excessive emphasis on such aspects of fecundity as breasts and hips, elaborate headdress and conspicuous girdle concealing the mount of Venus, and their overall conventional and hieratic appearance. They remain un-named, though, in various attempts to identify them, any number of names such as Pṛthivī, Mahī-mātā, Aditi, Vaśinī, *etc.*, have been supplied.[387] It has even been suggested that they belong to a tradition of an undifferentiated Mother Goddess.[388] Assuming that all these early figures which generally conform to a conventional or hieratic pattern represent goddesses or even mother-goddesses, which is very likely, it still appears to us unwarranted to presume that they represent the same deity in every case. Since controlled excavations have bracketted figures which were once regarded as earlier and later, a broad regional and typological classification alone would suggest the possibility of different goddess concepts. Thus the so-called "Baroque ladies" of the sites in the North-west Frontier region will have to be distinguished from their approximately contemporary counterparts at Mathura.[389] But even within the same regional style and group, there may have been differentiations of concepts which it is no longer possible to determine. A certain analogy for this suspicion is provided by the reliefs of the Bharhut stūpa. These reliefs are in a different medium, show an advanced style of art and even an advanced consciousness of iconographic differentiation inasmuch as certain figures are named in the labels accompanying them.[390] But in spite of this, it is still not possible to form accurate iconographic pictures of the deities depicted.[391] In fact, but for the labels, the many female figures represented in these reliefs might have been forced into one class and regarded as representations of various forms of the same deity, or the same type of deity.[392] Finally it may be added that while it is possible that these early terracotta figurines represent goddesses or mother goddesses, their precise purpose remains doubtful. It is uncertain whether they were cult icons or *ex voto* offerings, or were for use in purely magical rites, *etc.*[393]

Crude terracotta female figures of the conventional or hieratic "Goddess" type, as noted above, appear also in the later periods,[394] but, like the "goddesses" on the railing

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p. 28, where the dissent of Keith is also cited. Majumdar also doubted the early dating of the figure; see Majumdar, op. cit. . Citing the results of Majumdar's excavations at the site, Gordon suggested 300 B.C. as the earliest limit for the figure; see Gordon, op. cit., *JISOA*, XI, pp. 150-1.

[387] See Coomaraswamy, op. cit., *Mārg*, VI, n. 2, pp. 32-3; Agrawala, op. cit., *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, pp. 19 ff.; cf. Kramrisch, op. cit., *JISOA*, VII, p. 91.

[388] See Agrawala, op. cit., *AI*, 4, p. 107.

[389] Gordon has used the figurines of the North-west Frontier region to reconstruct the cult of the "Mother-Goddess of Gandhara" whom he tentatively calls Anaitis and who may have been locally identified with Hārītī; see Gordon, "The Mother Goddess of Gandhara", *Antiquity*, XI, 1937, pp. 70 ff.

[390] For the goddesses represented on the Bharhut railing pillars, with or without inscriptions giving their names, see Barua, *Barhut*, I, pp. 62, 85-6; II, pp. 70 ff.; also Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 368-9.

[391] The attempts made by Barua and Banerjea to identify many of the unnamed deities are largely of speculative nature; cf. also Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 100.

[392] Cf. Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut*, Intro. by V.S. Agrawala, p. xi.

[393] Cf. Gordon, op. cit., *JISOA*, XI, p. 178.

[394] See above; also Agrawala, op. cit., *AI*, 4, pp .108-9.

pillars of the Buddhist and Jaina stūpas, they also seem to dwindle in number gradually down to Gupta times.[395] On the other hand, specific iconographic types of such goddesses as Śrī-Lakṣmī, Vasudhārā, Pārvatī, Durgā-mahiṣamardinī, Cāmuṇḍā, Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Hārītī, Yakṣiṇīs, Nāginis, and occasionally the female counterparts of the goat-headed Naigameṣa, more doubtfully Koṭavī, the multi-headed Ṣaṣṭhī and Carcikā in cat form, *etc.*, have been identified in the terracottas of the Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa or Gupta periods, especially the latter.[396] The *mithuna* figures frequently appearing in the Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa period at Mathura, Kauśāmbī, Ahicchatrā, *etc.*, may also have some connection with goodess cults in so far as they can be interpreted as fertility symbols.[397] Such a connection may be suspected to an even greater extent in the mother and child figures during these periods.[398] A certain type of terracotta figuriness showing a nude squatting goddess and assignable to the Kuṣāṇa period has been found from Mathura and Kauśāmbī.[399] Similar pieces of comparable date also come from various sites in the Deccan, and the same motif is represented in stone figures of the Kuṣāṇa-Gupta and later periods.[400] A reference has been made above to one such piece from Nagarjunikonda bearing a dedicatory inscription, thus certifying the status of these figures as representations of a goddess. The precise prehistory of this goddess is not known. It is possible that her cult was introduced into India from the West sometime during the period of Roman contacts.[401] It may be added here that foreign influences of various kinds and foreign ethnic types and fashions have been noted throughout the terracotta pieces of the Maurya- Śuṅga, Śaka-Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods, these being most conspicuous during the Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa period.[402]

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[395] Goetz makes this point in "Aphrodite Urania: An Asiatic Cult in Ancient Greece, and a Corinthian Bronze in the Baroda Museum" *BBMPG*, III, pt. II, 1946 (1948), p. 13, but it can be substantiated also by the report on terracotta figurines from the Ahicchatrā excavations; see Agrawala, op. cit., *AI*, pp. 106 ff. : "Group I. Mother Goddess".

[396] See generally, Agrawala, op. cit., *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, pp. 28 ff.; and by the same author, op. cit., *AI*, 4, pp. 126, 130, 133 ff.; 151-2, 171 ff.; *Indian Art*, pp. 316 ff.; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op. cit., *Mārg*, XXIII, no. 1, pp. 43 ff. .

[397] See Aggrawala, op, cit., *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, pp. 31, 33; by the same author, op, cit., *AI*, 4, pp. 109 ff., 160 ff.; Kala, *Terracotta Figurines from Kauśāmbī, etc.*, pp. 27 ff. .

[398] See Agrawala, op. cit., *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, pp. 32-3; by the same author, op. cit., *AI*, 4, pp. 116, 146 ff.; Kala, op. cit., p. 26.

[399] See Marshall, "Excavations at Bhīṭā", *ASI-AR*, 1911-12, p. 75 and pl. XXIII. 40; *Indian Museum Cat.*, II, p. 286, no. Km. 36, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 75; Codrington, "Iconography: Classical and Indian" *Man*, XXXV, May 1935, pp. 65-6; Gupta (ed.), *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities*, p. 307, no. 145, pl. L (7716).

[400] For a full account of all the available figures of this type, see below, Ch. IV.

[401] For the cult of the Nude Squatting Goddess, see below, Ch. IV.

[402] See Coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, p. 12; Agrawala, op. cit., *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, p. 27; by the same author, op. cit., *AI*, 4. pp. 124 ff.; 155 ff.; *Indian Art*, pp. 313-4; Ray, Nihar Ranjan, in Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 533; Saraswati, *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, pp. 115-6; Kala, op. cit., pp. 41 ff.; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op. cit., *Mārg*, XXIII, no. 1, pp. 40, 43-4, 47. It may be noted that some of these figures which are attributed to the Mauryan period may actually belong to a slightly later date. See also below for discussion on some of these types.

Three other types of terracotta materiais may be especially mentioned in view of their obvious importance. One is a type of winged female two of whose early specimens come from Basarh and are assigned approximately to the Maurya-Śuṅga period.[403] Winged human figures are not common in Indian art, and winged female figures are particularly rare, only two other pieces being reported, one in bronze from Akhun Dherī and the other in stone from Mathura, both dated roughly in the Kuṣṇāa period.[404] Since the Basarh figures stands on a lotus, Coomaraswamy was inclined to identify her as Śrī-Lakṣmī,[405] but he regarded the wings as curious and apparently approved of Spooner's suggestion of a possible foreign influence, from West Asia or more likely from Persia.[406] Agrawala has identified the figure as Sapakṣa-ṣaṣṭhī referred to in the *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*, and suggested that this, as well as the type of winged Kāmadeva, who seems to be represented on a terracotta piece from Kauśāmbī, may have developed under the influence of the Hellenic concepts of Aphrodite and Eros respectively.[407]

Some other terracotta objects, approximately deteable to the 2nd-1st century B.C., also form a distinctive iconographic type. More or less complete or fragmentary specimens of it have been found over a very wide area, from Rupar (Panjab) in the west to Tamluk (Bengal) in the east, and including such sites in Uttar Pradesh as Kauśāmbī, Achicchatrā, Rajghat, Mathura, *etc.*[408] The best preserved specimen is the one from

[403] See Spooner, D.B., "Excavations at Basarh", *ASI-AR*, 1913-14, p. 116 and pl. XLIV. i (cf. also fig. g in the same place); Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography: II. Śrī-Lakṣmī", *Eastern Art*, I, no. 3, January 1929, pp. 181 and 174, fig. 3. Spooner was inclined to date the figure in the Mauryan period and used it as another evidence of Persian influence in Mauryan times. Some other scholars have ascribed the figures to the Śuṅga period; see Saraswati, op. cit., p. 115.

[404] See Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas" *Mārg*, VI, no. 2, p. 35, fn. 19.

[405] Coomaraswamy, op. cit., *Eastern Art*, I, no. 3, p. 181.

[406] Coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, p. 12; cf. also Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op. cit., *Mārg*, XXIII. no. 1, p. 40.

[407] Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, p. 61; also by the same author, review of Kala, *Terracotta Figurines from Kauśāmbī, etc.*, in *JUPHS*, XXII, 1949, pp. 237-8. It may be added that Saraswatī refers to the figures of a hermaphrodite from Rajghat, and Sankalia and Dhavalikar regard it as a foreign type; see Saraswatī, op. cit., p. 116; Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op. cit., *Mārg*, XXIII, no. 1, pp. 44-5.

[408] For the Tamluk figure, see the immediately following foot-note. For other specimens, mostly fragmentary, see Sharma, G.R., *The Excavations of Kauśāmbī* (*1957-59*,) pp. 93, 122, pl. 46. 14 and fig. 18.3; Kala, op. cit., pp. 21-2, 58, 61, pls. V.C. (cf. also A), XIV. A. 2; Agrawala, op. cit., *JUPHS*, IX, pt. II, pp. 19, 29, pl. V. 14, VIII. 26 (both slightly doubtful); by the same author, op. cit., *AI*, 4, pp. 110-1, pl. XXXII. 12 and fig. 1. 2. (the female figure appearing here as part of the *mithuna* motif); Gordon, op. cit., *JISOA*, XI, p. 191 and inset fig. on p. 195; Sharma, Y.D., "Past Patterns in Living as unfolded by Excavations at Rupar", *Lalit Kalā* 1-2, 1955-56, p. 126, pl. XLVIII. 21 (the middle piece): Das Gupta, Paresh Chandra, "Early Terracottas from Chandraketugarh", *ibid.*, 6, 1959, pp. 46-7, pls. XIII. 3, XV. 16 (cf. also XVI. 17); Gupta, Jagadīśa, "Āyudhālaṁkṛta Śirobhūṣa-yukta Bali-devī kī Rahasyamaya Mṛṇmūrtiyān", in Saksena, *etc.*, (eds.), *Kavirāja Abhinandana Grantha*, pp. 502, 507 and figs. 5-8, where similar figures from some other sites in Uttar Pradesh are noticed. Cf. also Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas", *Mārg*, VI, no. 2, fig. 29, said to come from Kauśāmbī and Chhabra, B. Ch., "Antiquities from Jhusi and Other Sites", *Lalit Kalā*, 9, 1961, pl. V. 8. Figures of this type are frequently discovered from North Indian sites; see. *e.g.*, *Purātattva* (Bulletin of the Indian Archaeological Society), VI, 1972-73, pp. 71-73, Fig. 5 on p. 73.

Tamluk, now in the Museum of the Indian institute at Oxford.[409] The figure is moulded, but finished by hand with meticulous care.[410] Standing against a background stamped with rosettes, the female figure is profusely ornamented and distinctively dressed from the shoulders to the ankles. All the ornaments - the ear-ornaments, the necklace, the series of bracelets on each wrist and the girdle-are unusually heavy. The most conspicuous is the elaborate headdress with a row of symbols attached to it which are identified generally as various types of weapons, such as *aṅkuśa*, *triśūla*, an axe-like weapon and another which looks like a chopper but may also be a *dhvaja*. It is these symbols in the coiffure that generally help to ascribe the many fragmentary pieces to the same type. Some other symbols associated with the Oxford figure are a pair of fish, a bird, a sleeping doe and a *makara* on what is described as a sash passing over the right shoulder and round the left hip like a bandolier; and paunchy squatting figures, sometimes identified as Kumbhāṇḍas, on the upper parts of the series of strings hanging from the tunic over the thighs.

While there has been considerable interest in this type, its identification has baffled scholars. Kramrisch tentatively suggested that it might represent the Apsarā Pañcacūḍā,[411] although there is no information about the existence of a cult of such a deity. Several others have simply identified it as a Yakṣiṇī,[412] which by itself is not very enlightening because any number of goddesses could be similarly designated. The figure has also been identified as Śrī-Lakṣmī.[413] Since Śrī Lakṣmī is always described as a young lady dressed in beautiful clothes and adorned with all kinds of ornaments,[414] the suggestion may have some basis. But no such figures of Śrī-Lakṣmī are known and no textual description of the goddess fits the iconographic peculiarities of the terracotta figure. The identification with the Vedic goddess Sinīvālī, suggested by some,[415] also suffers from the weakness that we have no evidence of a cult of this Vedic goddess in the period. One author has gone to the extent of suggesting that this terracotta type represents a composite deity combining together the *śaktis* of many deities indicated by their symbols.[416] This explanation is hardly possible for such early figures. The presence of the male figure in the Ahicchatrā plaque also does not help identification.[417] Although suspecting the divinity of the female in the composition, Agrawala has naturally classified it as a *mithuna* plaque.

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409. Johnston, E.H., "A Terracotta Figure at Oxford", *JISOA*, X, 1942, pp. 94 ff. and pl. IX. 1; also Gordon, op. cit., *ibid.*, XI, 1943, pp. 189 ff.; Saraswati, op, cit., pp. 110 ff. and 117, fn. 20.
410. See the detailed description of the figure in Johnston, op. cit..
411. Kramrisch, "Indian Terracottas", *JISOA*, VII, pp. 99-101.
412. See Sharma, Y.D. and Das Gupta, cited above; also Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 368.
413. See Sankalia and Dhavalikar, op. cit., *Mārg*, XXIII, no. 1, p. 43.
414. See Rao, *EHI*, II, pt. 2, App. C, pp. 133ff; also below Ch. IV.
415. See Sharma, G.R., op. cit.; also Pradhan, Ashok, "Terracotta Figurines of Sinīvālī", *The leader*, Weekly Magazine Section, 22 October, 1961, as cited in Gupta, J; op. cit., pp. 504 ff., Gupta examines this identification and does not find it quite satisfactory.
416. See Kala, op. cit., p. 22.
417. See Agrawala, op. cit., *AI*, 4, pp. 110-1.

Johnston, who brought the Oxford figure to light, later analysed it minutely in a separate paper.[418] He tried to find Indian parallels for many details and was generally inclined to regard it as a purely Indian product. But he also noticed certain curious features, especially of the dress, which are not explained through Indian sources and show some resemblance to figures of Hellenic origin.[419] His final conclusion was that the cult of the goddess represented by this figure may have prevailed in the Gangetic region much earlier than the period of these figures and that there was some possible relationship with the West Asiatic cult of the Mother Goddess, but that a precise identification of the goddess was not possible.[420] As proof that even in the centuries around the Christian era, the widely, prevalent cult of the Mother Goddess shows contacts with similar cults in West Asia, Johnston pointed to Oxyrhynchus Papyrus no. 1280, dated in the 3rd century A.D., which contains an invocation to Isis in which the goddess is equated with many mother goddesses known to the Greek world, including "Maia" in India. Later, in a fragmentary portion of the same invocation, a reference is also made to the goddess bringing floods in rivers, including the Ganges in India, and there is the suggestion that the fertility of the land depends on these rivers.[421] He suggested further that Maia of this source may be the same as the goddess Māyā referred to as *māyeva divi devatā* in the *Saundarānanda* of Aśvaghoṣa,[422] and she may, therefore, be presumed to have had a popular cult as a fertility goddess in the Gangetic valley.[423] Without committing himself, he also suggested the possibility that the Oxford figure, which also seems to represent a fertility goddess as indicated by the symbols like the fish and *makara*, may be a representation of the goddess Māyā.

The probability that the cult of a fertility goddess called Māyā existed in the Gangetic plain, at least in the early centuries of the Christian era is a very useful addition to our knowledge,[424] and, in view of the known contacts with India, it is also not unlikely

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[418] See Johnston, op. cit., *JISOA*, X, 1942, pp. 94 ff..

[419] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[420] *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 100-1.

[421] *Ibid.*, pp. 101-2.

[422] See *Saundarānanda*, ed. Johnston, II. 47:
Tasya devī nṛdevasya māyā nāma tadā'bhavat,
Vītakrodhatamo māyā māyeva divi devatā,

[423] Johnston,op. cit., pp. 101-102.

[424] Apparently encouraged by the findings of Johnston, Agrawala tried to adduce more evidence of the wide popularity of the goddess called Māyā. He identified "Sirimā-devatā" of Bharhut as a representation of this goddess, and believed that she was also regarded as identical with Śrī-Lakṣmī. Ancient Indian literature, however, does not clearly reveal the cult of a goddess called Māyā. The evidence is only of the type such as in the *Saundarānanda*. The references to *Māyā* generally in the abstract in the sense of "magical potency" especially of the Asuras, are not infrequent in the Vedic, epic and Purāṇic literature (see Macdonell, *VM*, pp. 24, 156; Hopkins, *EM*, esp. p. 39). According to Agrawala, the so-called *Māyā* of Asuras as referred to in the Vedic literature gradually developed into a goddess and her cult merged with that of Śrī-Lakṣmī. He also implied that the name *Mā*, by which Śrī-Lakṣmī was called in later history (see the interpolated line after line 54, p. 6, in NSP. edn. of the *Amarakoṣa* with the commentary by Maheśvara), and whose Prakrit variants may be *Māyi* or *Māyiā*, may be a contraction of the name *Māyā*. This inference is quite at variance

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that the contemporary Hellenic world is the west was familiar with this goddess, although this has also been doubted.[425] But, as Johnston himself felt, there is no real indication that the terracotta type discussed here represented this goddess. The presence of symbols with probable religious meanings, the profuse ornamentation, the elaborate headdress and the overall hieratic appearance clearly suggest the divine status of the type. Its very extensive distribution further suggests that the goddess had a widespread cult in North India in the one or two centuries preceding the Christian era. The exact identity of the goddess must remain uncertain until more information is available. We agree with Johnston that the type should be regarded as Indian. Not only are the various individual symbols identifiable as Indian, but the general style of the figure fits in with the terracotta materials generally assigned to the Śuṅga period, and as Gordon remarked, its elaborate piled-up headdress appears typically Śuṅga.[426] The possibility cannot be ruled out, however, that there is something alien in the form and character of this goddess. For the iconographic form of the type as a whole, there are no known parallels in Indian stone sculpture[427] and no textual authority to our knowledge in contemporary, earlier or later works. Apart from the characteristic conglomeration of the weapon-symbols in the headdress, the ornaments, though apparently Indian, are exceptionally heavy.[428] The most suspicious element appears to be the dress. While the more common practice in the case of the female figures in terracotta or stone during the Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa periods is to leave the breasts bare,[429] the Oxford figure is dressed in a tunic covering most of the upper body but leaving the right shoulder and part of the right breast bare. As a lower garment, the figure seems to wear an under-skirt reaching to the ankles. Johnston imagined that, as an alternative, the figure may be supposed to be dressed in a single garment with flounces.[430] On the whole, the dress has an unfamiliar and, judged by the contemporary art materials, somewhat un-Indian appearance.

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with the opinions of several other scholars who understood the Bharhut label *Sirimā* as the Prakrit feminine form of *Sirima* and corresponding to Pali *Sirīmatī* and Sanskrit *Śrīmatī*. In other words, in the name *Sirimā* at least, *Mā* is a suffix and not the member of a compound. The name has survived to this day in Ceylon, where it is commonly given to girls, and there it is never taken as containing an element *mā* connected with either *mātā* or *māyā*, but is looked on as a feminine form of *siri* (=*śrī*). What exactly is the origin of the name *Mā* given to Lakṣmī is difficult to say, but Agrawala's suggestion that it may be a contraction of Sanskrit *Māyā* or Prakrit *Māyi* or *Māyia* does not appear to us to be convincing; see Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, pp. 105 ff.; Barua and Sinha, *Barhut Inscriptions*, pp. 74 ff.; Lüders, *Bharhut Inscriptions*, *CII*, II, pt. II, pp. 77-8, where the authority of Hultzsch is also cited.

[425] See Keith. *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Preface, p. X.

[426] See Gordon, "Early Indian Terracottas", *JISOA*, XI, p. 190.

[427] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 194. Gordon, of course, made his comments before many other fragmentary pieces conforming to the same type were brought to light, but it must still be asserted that the type is very distinctive and without close iconographic parallels.

[428] Cf. Moti Chandra, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Veśabhūṣā*, p. 82, as cited in Gupta, "*Āyudhālaṁkṛta-Śirobhūṣā-yukta Bali-Devī Kī Rahasyamaya Mṛṇmūrtiyāṇ*", in Saksena, *etc.*, (eds.), *Kavirāja-Abhinandana Grantha*, p. 503.

[429] See Gordon, *op. cit.*, *JISOA*, XI, p. 192.

[430] Johnston, *op. cit.*, *JISOA*, X, p. 97.

Gordon pointed to a female figure of approximately 1st century A.D. from some site in the North-west Frontier region in which while the one breast is covered by the dress, the other is left bare.[431] Another scholar has suspected Scythian influence on the dress.[432] It appears to us, therefore, that there is some ground to suspect that the very popular goddess represented by the Oxford figure and several other fragments of the same type, if not entirely un-Indian, had some markedly alien features in her character. Since the age of the terracotta type may be approximately limited to the two centuries before the Christian era, with some possible overlappings in the 1st century A.D., the alien elements should have been received towards the beginning of this period. It is difficult to say however, whether these elements were derived from the West Asiatic, Hellenic, Iranian or Scytho-Parthian goddess cults.

The third type of terracotta materials to be noticed are the so-called "votive tanks" which were found at Sirkap in the archaeological context of the Scytho-Parthian period and in association with the Buddhist stūpas.[433] In a well preserved specimen, this object consists of a walled enclosure, with lamps on the three corners, birds on the three walls and a miniature shrine inside against the fourth wall. There are steps leading up to the shrine, outside which stands a figure, apparently of a goddess. Inside the enclosure are also small pillar-like objects, and the fragment of a similar enclosure shows two snakes with a pillar. Gordon interpreted these objects as model votive shrines of the Mother Goddess with various adjuncts of her cult, like the birds which must be doves, the snakes, the pillars and the lamps. He utilized these and the terracotta figures of goddesses of comparable date, the so-called "Baroque ladies", from various sites in the Gandhara region to reconstruct a popular cult of the Mother-Goddess of Gandhara who is manifested as the Persian Anaitis and the Buddhist Hāriti.[434] According to Gordon, the terracotta materials on which his reconstruction was based are not dateable before approximately 300 B.C.. Therefore, the cult of the Mother-Goddess revealed by them cennot be directly related to the chalcolithic cult of the Mother Goddess in the Indus Valley culture or to the ancient West Asiatic goddess cults, but in all probability it was a much more recent introduction from the west. In his opinion, the Hellenized Parthians might have introduced it in some Iranian form sometime in the 3rd century B.C..[435] Since, as noted above, the Chārsada excavations have vindicated Gordon's dating of the terracotta figurines referred to, his conjecture about the more recent introduction of some mother goddess cults in the region from the west may be accepted in principle.

Terracotta "votive tanks" or model shrines, very similar to those found at Sirkap, have also been found at Ahicchatrā in layers dateable from A.D. 100 to 200.[436] There

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431. Gordon, *op. cit.*, *JISOA*, XI, p. 193.
432. See Moti Chandra, *Prācīna Bhārātīya Veśabhūṣā* p. 82, as cited in Gupta, J., *op. cit.*, p. 503.
433. See Gordon, "The Mother-Goddess of Gandhara", *Antiquity*, XI, 1937, pp. 74 ff., and fig. 2.
434. Gordon, *op. cit.*, *Antiquity*, XI, pp. 70 ff.; esp. pp. 72-3, 78.
435. *Ibid.*; see also by the same author, "The Age of Frontier Terracottas", *Iraq*, V, 1938, p. 88.
436. See Agrawala, "Terracotta Figurines of Ahichchhatrā, *etc.*", *AI*, 4, pp. 125 ff., pls. XXX-VIII XXXIX.
437. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

are also walled enclosures with lamps at the corners. Although there is no clear indication of a shrine inside or the figure of a goddess, the resemblance is very striking. Inside the walled enclosures in the Ahicchatrā specimens we have musicians, playing on cymbals and drums. Shallow bowls are frequently depicted inside the enclosure, and some fragmentary specimens also show a bird. Agrawala naturally related these subjects to similar once from Sirkap and, accepting Gordon's thesis, came to the conclusion that the goddess cult introduced by the Hellenized Parthians into the Gandhara region seems to have quickly spread to various centres in North India.[437] In support of his inference, he has pointed to the drummer figures, several separate specimens of which were also found in layers of the same date as those yielding the votive tanks.[438] He suggested the possibility of these being foreign ethnic types and cited Van Ingen to the effect that the drummer type was specially popular at Seleucia during the period of the Parthians, who may have actually introduced it.[439]

We may close the discussion of the archaeological material with a reference to carved stone rings or discs found all over the North India from such sites as Taxila, Rupar, Mathura, Sankisa, Śrāvastī, Kauśāmbī Rajghat, Patna and Vaiśālī.[440] They are generally dated in the Maurya-Śuṅga period, although it has been specifically noted about the one from Vaiśāli that it came from a stratum assigned to 150 B.C.—100 A.D.[441] They are modest little pieces, generally ranging from 1.5" to 3.5" in diameter, with or without a central perforation. All contain carvings on the surface, and, in the case of several perforated ones, also on the rim of the inner circle. In several cases, the carvings are simply in the form of an elaborate geometrical or floral pattern, often with a central stylized lotus and sometimes resembling a *prabhā maṇḍala*. In some cases the concentric bands or symmetrically arranged segments contain animal and bird figures. But in a fairly large number of specimens, there are conspicuous figures of standing females alternating with all kinds of vegetal, animal and other devices. Amongst the floral motifs, the palm tree appears most frequently, and a winged lion is sometimes included among the animals. The female figures, always standing facing in a stiff posture, are apparently nude but often with a modest headdress, and their likeness to the gold repousse figures from Lauria-nandangarh and Piprahwa[442] has been frequently noted.

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[438] See Agrawala, "Terracotta Figurines of Ahicheheatra, *etc.*", pp. 124-5.

[439] *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6. Recent excavations at Sonkh near Mathura by German archaeologists have also yielded "Votive tanks", dateable in the first century B.C.; see Härtel, Herbert, "Some Results of the Excavations at Sonkh-A Preliminary Report", in *German Scholars on India,* Vol. II, pp. 88-89, and figs. 28-30.

[440] See Coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, p. 20; Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 62, 63 and fn. 1; Irwin, John, "Masterpieces of Oriental Art—16: Late Mauryan or Early Śuṅga Ring-stones", *JRAS*, 1951, pp. 1-2; Sharma, Y.D., "Past Patterns in Living as unfolded by Excavations at Rupar", *Lalit Kalā*, 1-2, 1955-56, p. 125, pl. XLVI. 13; Chhabra, B. Ch., "Antiquities from Jhusi and Other Sites", *Ibid.*, 9, 1961, p. 15, pl. VI. 14; Khandalavala, K.J., review of Krishna Deo and Vijayakanta Mishra, *Vaiśāli Excavations: 1950*, in *Ibid.*, p. 68; Gupta (ed.), *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities*, pp. 343-8, pls. LIII-LVII; also Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 168-73; Agrawala, *Indian Art*, pp. 77-82; and Agrawala, Prithvi Kumar, "The Early Indian Mother Goddess Votive Discs", *East and West* (N.S.), vol. 29, Nos. 1-4, Dec. 1979, pp. 75 ff.

[441] See Khandalavala's review of *Vaiśālī Excavations: 1950*, cited in the preceding foot-note.

The small size of these rings had earlier led some scholars to think of a utilitarian, possibly cosmetic, use for them,[443] but the consensus now is to give them a religious and ritual meaning and to regard the nude standing female as the representation of the Mother Goddess. Marshall tried to relate them to the ring stones of the Indus Valley culture—which, incidentally, do not contain any carvings and range from a half inch to four feet in diameter—and imagined that they were symbolic representations of the *yoni*, the female organ of generation, and served as necessary adjuncts, perhaps as votive offerings, in the cult of the Mother Goddess or Earth Goddess as Pṛthivī.[444] His suggestion seems to have taken firm root, and several subsequent scholars have seen in these carved rings even the prototypes of the Tantric *cakras* and *yantras.*[445]

Marshall's identification of the Indus Valley stone rings as symbols of *yoni* appears to us to be quite doubtful,[446] but the appearance of nude female figures in stiff hieratic postures on the carved rings of early historic times suggests some affiliation with goddess cults and some rapprochement with the nude or semi-nude terracotta female figurines of approximately the same period. In this general form, therefore, they may be said to be connected with the evolution of the cult of the Great Goddess as seen in the Purāṇic literature, but whether they also specifically anticipate the Tantric symbols and rituals appears to us, in the present state of our knowledge, to be largely speculative.

Sufficient literary and archaeological evidence has been adduced above to suggest that people in North India in our period generally believed in a very large number of goddesses, and that many of these goddesses had their own popular cults, local or special, and at least some of these popular figures were either wholly of foreign origin or had some foreign elements in their make-up. The very fact that these goddesses are of many different types and functions, and must have been of various independent origins, precludes a uniform historical explanation of their popularity. For the popularity of the individual figures or types which could be labelled as fertility deities, part of the explanation may lie in the predominantly agricultural nature of the society.[447] For certain other figures, especially the probably non-Aryan ethnic types, there may be some explanation in the matriarchal traits of the complex society of the times, of which some scholars have collected evidence,[448] even though we have no final proof of an essential connection between a matriarchal or matrilineal social organisation

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442. For the gold repoussé figures from Lauria-nandangarh and Piprahwa, see Bloch, *ASI-AR*, 1906-07, pp. 122 ff. and 124, fn. 3; and Majumdar, *Ibid.*, 1935-36, pp. 59-60, and pl. XXIII, a, b.
443. See Coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, p. 20; Irwin, *op. cit.*, (fn. 488 above), *JRAS*, 1951, p. 2.
444. See Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 61 ff.
445. See esp. Banerjea and Agrawala, cited above.
446. Cf. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 24.
447. Cf. Starbuck, Edwin D., "Female Principle',, *ERE*, 5, p. 828.
448. See *e.g.*. Kosambi, D.D., "On the Origin of Brahmin Gotras", *JBBRAS*, XXVI, 1950 (1951), pp. 70 ff., esp. 73-6. We agree with Kosambi (*Ibid.*, p. 70, note) that Ehrenfel's *Mother-right in India* is weak and speculative where it tries to collect evidence of matriarchy in ancient India.

and the prominence of mother goddess cults.[449] The wider cults of individual goddesses or types must be explained as the result of historical processes of movement and contact, and there may have been several goddesses whose special nature and function made them more enduring. This may be particularly said of goddesses with a demoniacal, fierce and warlike nature.[450] It is obvious, therefore, that a simple explanation of the phenomenon of widespread cults of goddesses cannot be given. What is certain, however, is that such a phenomenon existed. It is no wonder that Saṁvāhaka, anxious to avoid paying his gambling debts, is portrayed in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* of Śūdraka as hiding in the deserted temple of some goddess and trying to fool his pursuers by pretending to install himself as the image of the goddess,[451] when a god's temple and a god's idol would have better suited the context. The dramatist must have been aware of the numerous modest shrines of goddesses in his age to think of this apparently anomalous ruse.

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[449] See James, *The Cult of the Mother Goddess*, pp. 228-9.

[450] See Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 106, for similar explanation of the popularity of Rudra-Śiva. It is interesting to note that ancient Sanskrit texts actually voice this sentiment; see, e.g., *Mbh*., XII. 15-16a: Ya eva devā hantāras tāṅlloko'rcayate bhṛśam, and *Mat. P*., 225.12a: Pūjyante daṇḍino devair na pūjyante tv adaṇḍinaḥ.

[451] See *Mṛcchakaṭika*, Act II, NSP. edn., pp. 53 ff. It would appear that gamblers who would not pay their dues were wont to take shelter in deserted temples and by making themselves completely still pretend to be the image of the deity. Literature also records the motif of "magical" sex-change in this manner; see *Kathāsaritsāgara*, tr. Tawney: *The Ocean of Story*, Vol. IX, p. 18 (The story of Ṭhiṇṭhākarāla); *Caturabhāṇī*, Intro., p. 39; and Jain, *Vasudevahiṇḍi*, p. 29, also fn. 47; also Karambelkan, V.W,, "Magic Ritual in Sanskrit Fiction", JGJRI, vol. VII, pts. 2-4, 1950, pp. 125-41, esp. 137-9. All this, however, does not detract from the value of our argument.

2

Evolution of the Cult of Great Goddess

A very wide prevalence of the cults of goddesses of various types in the first six or seven centuries of the Christian era in North India has been demonstrated in the previous Chapter. This period is also characterised by the evolution of the concept and cult of Mahā-devī, the Great Goddess.[1]

The idea of the Great Goddess is a philosophical or at least a quasi-philosophical concept, and any satisfactory evidence of it can only be obtained from literary texts which dwell at length on the nature of the Goddess, narrate important myth or myths relating to her or present *stutis* in her honour. We may select for brief analyses the apocryphal hymns to the Goddess in the *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṁśa*, the *Devī-māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, the *Caṇḍi-śataka* ascribed to Bāṇabhaṭṭa and the eulogy of Vindhyavāsinī Devī in the *Gaūḍavaho* of Vākpati, directing our attention mainly to such elements as help understand the concept of the Goddess and the problem of its historical evolution.

The two apocryphal *stutis* to the Goddess in the *Mahābhārata* are contained in the *Virāta*-and *Bhīṣma-parvans*.[2] The one in the *Virāṭa-parvan* purports to be a hymn sung by Yudhiṣṭhira to Devī Durgā.[3] In this hymn, the Goddess is conceived of as the Supreme Deity, since she is called *Tribhuvaneśvarī* and is prayed to by the gods for the protection of the three worlds. But this is indirectly expressed also in various other ways. Thus the Goddess is given many names or identified with many goddesses, such as Jayā, Vijayā, Kālī, Mahākālī, Hrī, Śrī, Kīrti, *etc.* She is said to be the ultimate refuge in all kinds of difficult situations. She grants victory in battle, progeny, wealth, happiness, and freedom from fear, sickness and other privations. It is said that wherever, a person might be, at home or far away, in forests, on seas, in mountain wildernesses or in battle, if he prayed to the Goddess, all his desires would be fulfilled. The two myths to which the hymn makes specific reference are, firstly, the birth of the Goddess in the family of Nanda and as the daughter of Yaśoda, and, secondly, that of the Goddess destroying demons, especially the Buffalo-demon, Mahiṣāsura.[4] While the latter is expressed cryptically in the phrases *Asurāṇāṁ kṣayaṁkarī* and *Mahiṣāsura-nāśinī*, the former is emphasized in several expressive epithets or statements, such as *Yaśodā-garbha-saṁbhūtā*, *Nanda-gopa-kule-jātā*, *Kaṁsa-vidrāvaṇa-karī*, *Śilā-taṭa-vinikṣiptāmākāśaṁ prati gāminīm* and *Vāsudevasya bhaginī*. Other epithets such as *Nārāyaṇa-vara-priyā* also indicate her Viṣṇuite affiliations. Scattered over the hymn there are various statements describing the visual form of the Goddess, in which she is portrayed as a beautiful young lady, clothed in a heavenly dress and adorned with various ornaments. She is said to be armed with sword and shield and various other weapons such as *pāśa*, *dhanu* and *cakra*, *etc*. She also holds vessel, lotus and bell. Perhaps more significant from the iconographic point of view are such epithets of the Goddess as *caturbhujā* and *caturvaktrā*.[5] The use of epithets such as *Kumārī* and *brahmacāriṇī*, reference to the *brahmacharya* of the Goddess and to her being the "pure woman", and the specific statement *Kaumāraṁ vratam-āsthāya tridivaṁ pāvitaṁ tvayā*[6] suggest the conception of a virgin goddess. The Goddess is also said to be fond of *sīdhu*, *māṁsa* and *paśu*, and the Vindhya mountain is mentioned as her permanent abode. Yudhiṣṭhira is said to have invoked the Goddess when he and his brothers, deprived of their kingdom, were entering Virāṭa-nagara, and he asks specifically for protection and victory.

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[1] We use the expression "Great Goddess" mainly as a convenient descriptive term. The sources do use the word "Mahā-devī" (see *Mbh.*, vol. 5, p. 301, App. I-4D, 1.43; *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 710, App. I, no. 1, 1.25; *Hv.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., II. 3.6; *etc.*), but they frequently refer to the Goddess under the general name "Devī" or under one of her popular names such as Durgā, Pārvatī, Gaurī, Ambikā, Caṇḍikā, *etc*.

[2] We have chosen for analysis the versions of the the hymns as given in the Kinjawadekar's edition of the text; see *Mbh.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., IV. 6 and VI. 23; also *Mbh.*, Cr. edn., vol. 5, pp. 301-2, App. I-4D, and *Ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 710-1, App. I, no. 1. Since both the hymns are quite short and it is easy to locate authorities for various statements in our analysis of them, we have refrained from citing sources for the individual statements.

[3] See *Mbh.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., IV. 6, and *Ibid.*, Cr. edn., vol. 5, pp. 301-2, App. I-4D.

Arjuna's hymn in the *Bhīṣma-parvan* is also said to be directed to the Goddess Durgā for victory in the imminent Mahābhārata war.[7] The greatness of the Goddess is expressed in this hymn not so much by specific epithets or direct statements as indirectly, by supplying her with an even larger number of names. Some of these names may be purely descriptive epithets, coined solely for the purposes of the prayer to suggest the greatness of the Goddess, but many may refer to independent godddess-concepts. Among these names appear Āryā, Kālī, Bhadra-kālī, Mahā-kālī, Karālī, Caṇḍī, Caṇḍā, Kāpālī, Kauśikī, Umā, Śākambharī, Virūpākṣi, Jāta-vedasī, Brahma-vidyā, Mahā-nidrā, Svāhā, Svadhā, Sarasvatī, Veda-mātā Sāvitrī, Māyā, Hrī, Śrī, *etc*. Here also the Goddess appears as the destroyer of Dānavas in general, but the epithets

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[4] For the myths of the Goddess as born in the family of Nanda and as killer of Mahiṣāsura, see below.

[5] Coomaraswamy has noted that images with four or more arms do not appear before the 2nd century A.D., see Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, I, p. 29. The epithet *Caturbhujā* may therefore indicate a slightly developed iconographic concept. Also, since the four-faced form of the Goddess could not have been a popular one, could it be that *Caturvaktrā* is a mistake for *Candravaktrā*? (Cf. the expression *Candravaktrā caturbhujā* for the Goddess in *Hv*., 48.30).

[6] Cf. also *Hv*., 47.45

[7] See *Mbh*., Kinjawadekar's edn., VI. 23; *Ibid*., Cr. edn., vol. 7, pp. 710-1, App. I, no. 1.

Nanda-gopa-kulodbhavā and *Mahiṣāsṛka-priyā* refer to specific myths as in the previous hymn. In addition, the Goddess is credited with killing Kaiṭabha, a feat generally reserved for Visṇu in the Purāṇic myths.[8] Again, in this hymn also the Goddess bears the epithet *Kumārī*, but at the same time she is also called *Jananī*. The popularity and pervasive influence of the Goddess is expressed in the statement that she is found in her shrines in various places all over the Jambū-dvīpa. She is also addressed as *Kāntāra-vāsinī*.

Several hymns to the Goddess were interpolated also in the *Harivaṁśa*, of which the most representative is the*Āryā-stava* inserted in the description of the myth of Kṛṣṇa's birth.[9] As in the two hymns noted above, several names are given to the Goddess in the *Āryā-stava.* Quite appropriately to the context, she is specifically called Nārāyaṇī, besides *Baladevasya bhaginī* and *Nanda-gopa-sutā.* But she is also described as Triśūlī and said to be as Pārvatī among all women. There is reference to her being known as Vindhyavāsinī, but the hymn also emphasizes that the Goddess is of many forms and is found in many places, such as on mountains, in forests, rivers, caves, *etc.* She is said to be worshipped by Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas. There is no lack of emphasis on the fierce aspect of the Goddess. She is described as *Raudrī*, *Prakīrṇa-keśī*, *Mṛtyu*, *Surā-māṁsa-bali-priyā*, *Kalaha-priyā*, destroyer of demons, *etc.*, and is identified with the terrible Revatī, Śakunī and Pūtanā who appear as Bāla-grahas in other taxts.[10] But on the whole the *Āryā-stava* tends to be more figurative and philosophical, especially in its references to the Goddess being found in various places and in various forms. Also it contains, besides the epithet Tribhuvaneśvarī, the specific statement that whatever, is in this world, whether mobile or immobile, is pervaded by the Goddess. There is also considerable emphasis on the Goddess removing sickness, death, fear, and satisfying all kinds of desires, for wealth, progeny, *etc.* She is a protector-goddess par excellence, *bhaktānāṁ parirakṣiṇī.*

The *Devī-māhātmya* is a long tract of several chapters contained in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and it is not possible to summarise its contents in the manner of the shorter hymns such as those noted above.[11] On the whole, however, it may be said to present

[8] Cf. *Mār. P.*, 78.49 ff., esp. 74; *Ibid.*, tr. Pargiter, pp. 469 ff.

[9] See *Hv.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., II. 3. It may be noted here that although this hymn is regarded as an interpolation, considerable parallel material about the concept of the Goddess in the preceding and the following chapters is retained in the Cr. edn.: see *Hv.*, Cr. edn., 47-24 ff.; 48.26 ff. For some other hymns to the Goddess in the vulgate editions of the text, see *Hv.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., II. 107.4 ff.; 120.1 ff. As in the case of the apocryphal hymns in the *Mahābhārata*, we have here also refrained from tracing individual statements in our analysis to specific verses in the hymn.

[10] See above, Ch. I.

[11] The *Devī-māhātmya* is formed of the chapters 78-90 of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (chs. 81-93 in Pargiter's translation, pp. 465-523). The last two chapters, which are in the nature of *phala-śruti* and refer to the worship of the clay images of the Goddess, are apparently later interpolations into the original poem; see Agrawala, V.S., "The *Devī-māhātmya*", *JIH*, XLII, 1964, p. 832. Agrawala feels that the chapter 88, which contains a long *stuti* to the Goddess as Nārāyaṇī, may also not

(Contd.)

in elaborate form what is contained in suggestive epithets and expressions in the shorter hymns noted above. Thus, the *Devī-māhātmya* dwells longer on the conception of the Goddess as the Supreme Power. It invents a myth of the origin of the Goddess[12] mainly with a view to bringing out her greatness and her all-powerful aspect. Also it describes in considerable detail the Goddess' victory over the demons Mahiṣa, Śumbha and Niśumbha, *etc.*, and sometimes digresses upon descriptions of various forms of the Goddess. In a philosophical aside on her nature at the very beginning of the text, the Devī is described as the Mahā-māyā of Hari,[13] and she is given the name Nārāyaṇī in a hymn to her contained in the text.[14] But besides the very general Devī, the names most commonly given to the Goddess in the mythological narratives are Ambikā and Caṇḍikā, and rarely Bhadrakālī, Durgā and Kātyāyanī.[15] Caṇḍikā-Ambikā is also the name given her in the description of her origin from the collective energy of the gods, in order to kill Mahiṣāsura and his demon-host.[16] Though the Goddess herself is sometimes referred to as Bhadra-kālī,[17] Kālī, identified with Cāmuṇḍā, is described as her emanation.[18] The Mātṛs appear as personified energies of various gods, and actively help Ambikā-Caṇḍikā against the demons, but not unnaturally they are also regarded as forms of the Goddess.[19] In one place, the principal form of the Goddess is called Pārvatī, and Ambikā; Kauśikī and Kālī are described as her secondary forms.[20] In another, while Ambikā-Caṇḍikā-Kātyāyanī is regarded as the principal form, others, such as Rakta-dantikā, Śatākṣī, Śākambharī, Bhīmā and Bhrāmarī, and probably also Durgā, are portrayed only as her lesser forms.[21] The *Devī-māhātmya* also refers briefly to the myth of the birth of the Goddess as the daughter of Yaśoda, and to the Vindhya mountain as one of her seats.[22]

The concept of the Goddess as the Supreme Power is brought about in various ways in the *Devī-māhātmya*. Some approaches to it are frankly of a philosophical

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have formed part of the original poem. We too suspect that the poem may have been originally a shorter piece, and that perhaps the Madhu-Kaiṭabha myth in the beginning of it did not form part of the text when it was inserted in the *Purāṇa*; see our own, "An Interesting Variant in the *Devī-māhātmya*", *Purāṇa*, XXV, pt. 2, July 1983, pp. 235-245. A very recent and definitive study of the text is by Thomas B. Coburn, *The Crystallization of the Worship of the Goddess: The Sources and Context of the Devī-māhātmya* (Harv. Univ. Ph. D. Thesis, 1977). For his purpose, Coburn also treats the *Devī-mahātmya* as a complete unit and addresses himself to questions as : how in this text is the Sanskritic tradition made contemporary and the worship of the Goddess made traditional.

12. *Mār P.*, 79.8 ff.; tr. Pargiter, pp. 473-4.
13. *Ibid.*, 78.41; tr. Pargiter, p. 469.
14. *Ibid.*, 88.7 ff.; tr. Pargiter, pp. 513 ff.
15. See *Mār. P.*, 79,50, 53, 68; 80.1, 8, 11, 24, 28, 30; 81.34, 35; 82.69; 85.23; *etc.*
16. *Ibid.*, 79.50, 53, 68; tr. Pargiter, pp. 476-8.
17. *Ibid.*, 81.35; tr. Pargiter, pp. 488.
18. *Ibid.*, 84 4 ff., 26; tr. Pargiter, pp. 499-500.
19. *Ibid.*, 85.11 ff.; 87.3-4; tr. Pargiter, pp. 502-3, 509.
20. *Ibid.*, 82.40 ff.; tr. Pargiter, pp. 493-4.
21. *Ibid.*, 88.38 ff.; tr. Pargiter, pp. 517-8.
22. *Ibid.*, 88.38-9; tr. Pargiter, p. 517.

and cosmogonic nature. Thus, without in any way assigning a precedence to Viṣṇu, and apparently to bring out the aspect of the Goddess as the eternally active principle at the back of the world-process, Devī is said to be the Mahā-māyā of Hari.[23] It may be supposed that the idea is taken from sectarian Viṣṇuite theology mixed with Sāṁkhya ideology,[24] but, in the *Devī-māhātmya*, it is thoroughly shorn of any Viṣṇuite element except in the bare reference to Hari and the identification of the Goddess with the periodic cosmic sleep of that god. The real sources of the philosophical basis of the Great Goddess should be traced to a theistic adaptation of Upaniṣadic Vedāntaism mixed with Sāṁkhya conception of Prakṛti.[25] As it is, the Goddess is imagined as the Supreme Principle in her own right, as eternally existing, as Supreme Knowledge, as the cause of the bondage and the final liberation of beings, *etc.*[26] Statements of philosophical import, suggesting a monotheistic or, more accurately, a monistic concept of the Goddess are frequently seen in the various short eulogies contained in the text. Sometimes they are in the explicit form of attributing to the Goddess the origin, sustenance and absorption of the world,[27] but often they are poetic expressions suggesting her all-pervasive nature. The epithets *Jaganmātā*[28] and *Mātṛ-rūpeṇa-saṁsthitā*,[29] which have obvious religious overtones, could also be understood in a cosmic sense. There is also the Goddess' assurance, apparently modelled on that of Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavadgītā*, that whenever, trouble may arise on account of the Dānavas, she will become incarnate and accomplish the foes' destruction.[30] It is the mythological narratives, however, that truly bring out the concept of the Goddess as the Supreme Power. The most expressive, of course, is the account of the origin of Ambikā-Caṇḍikā from the combined energies of all the gods,[31] but this is suggested throughout in the actions of the Goddess, as extending her protective mantle over the helpless gods, as a fierce fighter, riding her ferocious lion and annihilating the demons one by one. The recurrent hymns of praise sung by the gods after the achievement of various feats by the Goddess add their own touches and further enhance the effect. Individually, they are not very different from the apocryphal hymns in the epic and the *Harivaṁśa*, but in their cumulative effect, they are even more impressive, more elaborate and more figurative. These hymns contain not only many names given to the

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 78.40-1; tr. Pargiter, p. 469.

[24] For one instance of Viṣṇuite sectarian theology, especially cosmogony, and the general resemblance of Viṣṇu's creative *śakti* with Sāṁkhya Prakṛti, see Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā*, pp. 29 ff., 68 ff.

[25] See also below.

[26] *Mār. P.*, 78-42-4, 47-8; tr. Pargiter, p. 469.

[27] Cf. *Ibid.*, 78.56 (tr. Pargiter, p. 470), which occurs in Brahmā's *stuti* to the Goddess:

Tvayaitad-dhāryate viśvaṁ tvayaitatsṛjyate jagat,
Tvayaitatpālyate devi tvamatsyaṁte ca sarvadā.

[28] *Ibid.*, 80.34; tr. Pargiter, p. 481.

[29] *Ibid.*, 82.34; tr. Pargiter, pp. 492-3.

[30] *Ibid.*, 88.51; tr. Pargiter, p. 518.

[31] *Mar. P.*, 79.8 ff.; tr. Pargiter, pp. 473-4.

Goddess but also elaborate poetic descriptions, in which she is identified with every mental and moral faculty.[32]

Of the two other texts that we have especially chosen to analyse, the *Caṇḍī-śataka* ascribed to Bāṇabhaṭṭa[33] is composed of a series of independent stanzas, mostly couched in the form of benedictions.[34] Again, these benedictions generally seek the protection of the Goddess, although it is also wished that she may give prosperity, destroy sins and purify, ward off troubles, satisfy desires, *etc*. Since the poem is entitled *Caṇḍī-śataka*, Caṇḍī or Caṇḍikā could be imagined as the principal name of the Goddess, but in the stanzas themselves, the name Pārvatī appears most frequently.[35] Other frequently appearing names are Umā, Devī and Ambikā. Several names of the Goddess are specifically derived from those of Śiva, such as Śivā, Bhavānī, Rudrāṇī, and Śarvāṇī. The Goddess is sometimes also referred to as Kālī, Kālikā, Bhadrakālī, Durgā, Kātyāyanī, Āryā, Gaurī, *etc*., and some names refer to her as the daughter of Himavat mountain.[36] In some cases, a boon is sought from the Goddess through the intercession of her son Kārttikeya.[37] The most important thing to note is that all except four stanzas in the *Caṇḍī-śataka* refer to the victory of the Goddess over the Buffalo-demon.[38] Of the remainder, three allude to Kaṁsa's attempt to dash the Goddess against a stone.[39]

The hymn to Vindhyavāsinī Devī sung by the king Yaśovarmā in the *Gaūḍavaho* is in some ways markedly different from the texts referred to above.[40] There is no doubt, of course, that this also refers to the Great Goddess or Mahā-devī. Vindhyavāsinī Devī is described as the killer of the Buffalo-demon and as the daughter of Himālaya.[41] She is also addressed as Kālī, Caṇḍī, *Nidrā-rūpiṇī*, Kalyāṇī, *etc*.[42] Epithets such as Mādhavī and Nārāyaṇī suggest a Viṣṇuite affiliation, as does also the allusion to her as flying up to the sky when Kaṁsa tried to kill her.[43] But there is even greater emphasis on the association with Śiva. The Goddess is not only regarded as the daughter of Himavat mountain and addressed as Bhairavī and Śaṁkarī, but she is also specifically said to form half of the body of Śaśi-śekhara or Śiva.[44] The malevolent aspect of the Goddess and her rites, however, emerges far more prominently in this hymn than in the texts analysed above. In this respect, the concept of Goddess as presented in the *Gaūḍavaho* is closer to the description of Caṇḍikā, her shrine and her chief priest in the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa and that of Cāmuṇḍā and her votaries in the *Mālatī-mādhava* of Bhavabhūti.[45] There are pointed references in the hymn in the *Gaūḍa-vaho* to human and animal offerings to the Goddess. Since her shrine is located in the Vindhyas, a Śabara is fittingly portrayed as the guide of the king,[46] and the Goddess herself is once addressed as Śabarī.[47] There is also a reference to Koli women, apparently belonging to some non-aryan aboriginal tribe, crowding to make their offerings to the Goddess.[48]

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[32] See esp. *Mār. P.*, 82.13 ff.; tr. Pargiter, pp. 490 ff.

[33] On the *Caṇḍī-śataka*, see Bühler, G., "On the Caṇḍikā-śataka of Bāṇabhaṭṭa", *IA*, April 1872, pp. 111-5; Quakenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra*, pp. 245 ff. (Introduction) and 267 ff. (Text and Translation).

[34] Quackenbos, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 258-9.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 247; see also Bühler, *op. cit.*, *IA*, 1872, p. 111.

[39] See Quackenbos, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

[40] *Gaūḍavaho*, vv. 285-338; also *Ibid.*, Intro., pp. xxi-xxiii.

[41] *Ibid.*, vv. 285-6, 290.

[42] *Ibid.*, vv. 289-90, 296-7.

[43] *Ibid.*, vv. 285, 291, 308.

[44] *Ibid.*, vv. 287, 292.

The concept of the Great Goddess as supreme power emerges also in various other cosmogonic and mythological contexts, as for example in the account of Devi and her various forms in the *Deva-sṛṣṭi* section of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*,[49] in the myth of Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī to produce a son who would destroy the demon Tāraka as narrated in the *Matsya Purāṇa*,[50] in the later Pīṭha legends,[51] *etc.* But an important and frequently appearing myth, to which reference has been made earlier, is of the birth of the Goddess as the daughter of Nanda and Yaśodā. In this form, she is said to have saved the life of Kṛṣṇa and warned Kaṁsa of his impending destruction. Naturally, the myth finds a prominent place in several Viṣṇuite texts, such as the *Harivaṁśa*, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.[52] All these texts refer to the Goddess as Yoga-nidrā or Mahā-māyā of Viṣṇu, to her flying up towards the sky when released from Kaṁsa's grasp and later being adored in many forms at many places. The *Harivaṁśa* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* also add that the Goddess would be received by Indra as his own sister, would destroy the demons, especially Śuṁbha and Niśuṁbha, and find her permanent abode on the Vindhyas.[53] Further, the two texts also refer to the offerings of wine and animal flesh to the Goddess,[54] and since she was born to Yaśodā on the ninth day of the dark half of the month of *Nabhasa* in the rainy season, that day is treated as a sacred one for her worship.[55] The *Harivaṁśa* also identifies the Goddess as Ekānaṁśā and informs us that she was adored by the Vṛṣṇis and brought up like a son.[56]

From a philosophical point of view, the idea of the Supreme Goddess that emerges from the materials noticed above may be characterised as a type of monism. Its sources, as in fact those of the sectarian theistic philosophy is general, especially as it is seen in the *Purāṇas*,[57] should be traced back to the monistic strands in Vedic philosophical

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45. See below.
46. *Gaūḍavaho*, v. 338.
47. *Ibid.*, v. 305.
48. *Ibid.*, v. 319; also Intro., p. xxii.
49. *Vāy. P.*, 9.82-98.
50. *Mat. P.*, 154.56 ff., esp. 71-84.
51. See above, Ch. I.
52. *Hv.*, chs. 47-8 and 96.11 ff.; *Viṣ. P.*, V. 1 ff.; *Bhā. P.*, X. 1 ff.
53. *Hv.*, 47.46 ff.; *Viṣ. P.*, V. 1. 80 ff.
54. *Hv.*, 47.51; *Viṣ. P.*, V. 1.85.
55. See *Hv.*, 47.34, 51; *Viṣ. P.*, V. 1.77.
56. *Hv.*, 96.11 ff.
57. See Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, III, p. 497.

thought especially the Upaniṣadic concept of Brahman, and the Sāṁkhya concept of Prakṛti. It is, however, the mythological aspect that is of the greatest interest to us. From this point of view, the material noticed above present the concept and cult of a goddess who was regarded as all powerful, as destroyer of demons, especially Mahiṣāsura, and as protector par excellence in all and every situation. She was regarded as having many names and forms, and as being worshipped every-where. As one caring for her devotees, as a saviouress and protectress, as one who granted all kinds of boons and cured various evils, as a pure woman, a model wife and loving mother, the Goddess is benign and merciful. But as destroyer of demons, as demanding offerings of wine and flesh, including human flesh, as having her shrines in mountain wilds and as worshipped by aboriginal tribes like Śabaras, *etc.*, she is fierce and forbidding.

It may be noted that while the materials examined above clearly suggest a widespread cult of the Great Goddess, they do not provide definite evidence of an exclusive organised sect.[58] They certainly do not provide any evidence that the cult of the Goddess was only an offshoot from either the cult of Śiva or that of Viṣṇu,[59] although a certain affiliation with both these deities is apparent. While the Viṣṇuite element would seem to be quite prominent in some myths, the association of the Great Goddess with Śiva appears to have been far closer, since many of the principal names of the Goddess, such as Ambikā, Umā, Pārvatī, *etc.*, are known to be names of Śiva's consort. The instance of the *Devī-māhātmya* itself is very instructive in this connection. While this text is introduced as an account of the Goddess who is the Mahā-māyā of Hari-Viṣṇu, it refers to her in the lengthy mythological narratives of her various feats not as Lakṣmī, Vaiṣṇavī or Nārāyaṇī, but generally as Ambikā or Caṇḍikā.[60] But there are a large number of cosmogonic and other myths in which it is specifically the consort of Śiva who appears as the Supreme Goddess. Thus the Goddess who is described in the *Deva-sṛṣṭi* section of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* as pervading the entire world in thousands of forms, of which dozens are actually named, is initially introduced as forming half of the body of Śiva.[61] Similarly, it is the one destined to be Śiva's consort who is presented as the Supreme Goddess in the *Tāraka-vadha* episode in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[62] The most definite evidence is, of course, of the Pīṭha legends in which the many goddesses

[58] Cf. Hartmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmī*, p. 40; also Agrawala, *op. cit.*, *JIH*, XLII, 1964, pp. 824, 826. In the opinion of Farquhar, Śākta systems began to appear from a time not much earlier than 6th century A.D. and Śākta Upaniṣads from not much earlier than 10th century A.D., see his *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 167 ff. and 266-7. Hazra agreed with this and felt that Śākta philosophy attained recognition not earlier than 9th century and not later than Albiruni's time. In fact, Hazra has used this broad criteria to date Purāṇic materials, and on the same basis regards *Vāyu Purāṇa*, Ch. 104, which mentions (104.16), Śākta-darśana along with Brāhma, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Saura and Ārhata (*i.e.*, Jaina), as late; see Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records*, *etc.*, pp. 90-91.

[59] Cf. Monier-Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 184.

[60] The name Caṇḍikā, literally "the violent one", seems to have been derived from *caṇḍa* which appears as an epithet of Śiva and Skanda; see Hopkins, *EM*, p. 225.

[61] *Vāy. P.*, 9.82; see also above, Ch. I, pp. 21-2.

[62] *Mat. P.*, 154.56 ff.; see also above, p. 99.

and their holy shrines in the country are affiliated to Satī, the wife of Śiva.[63] In fact, the very close association of the Supreme Goddess with Śiva has never been doubted, and many authors even begin their account of Devī worship by tracing the history of the consort of Śiva.[64] Hopkins is certainly right in his assumption that the adoption of Devī or Durgā is a late feature of Viṣṇuism.[65]

Confining ourselves for the present to the fully evolved concept as seen above and its apparently highly sycretistic nature, it may be noted that there is a general consensus that the many so-called names and forms of the Great Goddess actually refer to independent goddess concepts which were utilized, or actually merged, to form the concept of the Great Goddess.[66] A very strong strand in the make-up of the composite Great Goddess is generally supposed to be formed by the consort of Rudra-Śiva, variously named as Ambikā, Umā, Pārvatī, Gaurī, Salī, Katī, *etc.*[67] In the epic-Purānic myths, Gaurī appears also as the wife of Varuṇa.[68] According to Weber, she may refer to the Vedic Nirṛti.[69] It has also been suggest that she may have been originally worshipped by the yellow-skinned Mongoloids of the Himalayan region.[70] Since a typical brāhmaṇa is Sometimes described as *gaura*, "fair-complexioned",[71] the name Gaurī may have been a contribution of the brahmanical tradition and may suggest the godddess in the brahmanical circles. The popular Purāṇic mythology frequently understands the name Kālī as denoting the black colour of the Goddess.[72] It is possible, therefore, that Kālī was originally a goddess of some dark-skinned aboriginal tribe. But her character and function as the cruel goddess of destruction also connect her with Time, or Kāla, in the sense of ill fate and death, which is also a name of *Śiva* in his aspect as a god of destruction.[73] In any case, as Weber suggested very early she seems to be connected with Kālī which is given as a name to one of the seven flames or tongues of the Fire-god in the *Muṇḍaka Upanisad.*[74] Whether a cruel

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63. See above, Ch. I, pp. 22 ff. for Pīṭha legends.
64. See below.
65. Hopkins, *EM*, p. 225.
66. See *e.g.*, Jacobi, H., "Brahmanism", *ERE*, 2, p. 813; Bhondarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 143-4.
67. See below.
68. See Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 63, 120, 225.
69. As cited in Muir, *OST*, IV, p. 425.
70. See Sircar, D.C., "The Śākta Pīṭhas", *JRASBL*. XIV, no. 1, 1948, p. 3, fn. 2.
71. See *Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya*, ed. Kielhorn, vol. I, p. 411, 11.18-9, Commenting on Pāṇini, II. 2.6.
72. See *e.g.*, *Mār. P.*, 82.44; 84.4-5 (tr. Pargiter, pp. 494 and 499 respectively); cf. also *Vāy. P.*, 9.83.
73. See Hopkins, *EM*, p. 76; Sircar, *op. cit.*, *JRASBL*, XIV, no. 1, p. 3, fn. 2. Mazumdar has tried to connect the two meanings of *Kāla*, "black" and "time". He has argued that *Kāla*, meaning black, is derived from Dravidian *kar*=black (**kar*-Tamil *karappu*=black), and *kāla*, signifying time, comes from this source bacause darkness and fate are associated with *kāla* in its uses in early times; see Mazumdar, *The History of Bengali Language*, p. 76. Bhattacharji thinks that something of Vedic Nirṛti survived in Kālī and other kindread goddesses; see her *The Indian Theogony*, pp. 14, 85.
74. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.4 (Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 675; also as cited in Muri, *OST*, IV, pp. 425, 429-30; see also below). The authenticity of this reference has sometimes been doubted; see Belvalkar and Ranade, *The Creative Period*, p. 94.

goddess named Kālī was already in existence at that time is uncertain, but it is apparently this goddess who appears in some brahmanical domestic rites with her name euphemistically changed as Bhadra-Kālī.[75] In the *Sauptika Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, when an angry Asvatthama was on a rampage in the Pāṇḍava camp, Kālī is said to have appeared before the dying people, binding *preta*s in her snares. She is called Kāla-rātri and is described as a fierce goddess of death, who had red eyes, wore red garlands and was painted red; she was also dressed in red and carried *pāśa* in her hand.[76] It is quite probable that Kālī was originally an independent goddess. Even in the later period, a clear distinction is sometimes imagined between her and Śiva's consort.[77] Cāmuṇḍā, who is identified with Kālī in the Devī-māhātmya, is a very late entrant into the brahmanical pantheon. Her name is unknown in the epics. But the fact that she occupies such a prominent position in the *Devī-māhātmya* and the text finds it necessary to produce a special explantion of her name indicates clearly that she was a quite popular goddess at the time of its composition.[78]

The origin of Durgā is also obscure. As we have noted also in the preceding chapter, her name suggests a goddess of mountainous and forest regions. Perhaps it is she who was originally associated with the Vindhya mountainous and was worshipped through bloody rites by several aboriginal non-Aryan tribes like the Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas.[79] In the account of Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī, the *Matsya Purāṇa* once distinguishes between Pārvatī and Durgā and seems to connect the latter with the forests, infested with tigers and lions, in the vicinity of the river Ganges.[80] In any case, considering that the apocryphal hymns to the Goddess in the *Mahābhārata* are specifically said to have been sung in praise of Durgā, and the Great Goddess is more than once referred to under this name in the mythological narratives of the *Devī-māhātmya*, Durgā must have had a very popular cult and made a major contribution to the formation of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess.

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[75] *SGS*, II. 14.14 (*SBE*, XXIX, p. 86); *Manu-Smṛti*, III. 89; *Vaikhanasa-Smārta-sūtra*, III. 7 (tr. Caland, p. 77).

[76] *Mbh*. X. 8.64 ff.

[77] In *Kumārasaṁbhava*, VII. 39, the *Kapālābharaṇā Kāli* follows the Mātṛs in the train of Śiva when the latter is proceeding to marry Pārvatī; see also Hartmann, *Beitrage zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmī*, p. 36, citing *Liṅga Purāṇa*, II. 6.53, where also a similar distinction is made.

[78] Kālī is said to have obtained the name Cāmuṇḍā after killing Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa; see *Mar. P.*, ch. 84 (tr. Pargiter, ch. 87, pp. 499-500). Cāmuṇḍā is frequently counted among the Mātṛs; see below, Ch. III.

[79] Cf. Mazumdar, B.C. "Durgā: Her Origin and History", *JRAS*, 1906, pp. 335 ff.; Hopkins, *EM*, p. 225. The tribes inhabiting the Vindhya mountains are frequently described as following anti-brahmanical ways; see *e.g. HV*., I. 5.20; *Mbh*., XII. 59.99-103; *Vāy. P.*, 44.121-124; *Viṣ. P.*, I. 13.33 ff; *etc.* Notice also the marked emphasis on the fierce aspect of the Goddess in the hymn to Vindhyavāsinī Devī in *Gaūḍavaho*, already noticed, and especially the reference to Kolī women as worshippers of the Goddess, to a leaf-clad Śabara aboriginal escorting the king to the Goddess' temple and to the Goddess herself once addressed as Śabaraī.

[80] *Mat. P.*, 154.561.

A very curious figure is Ekānaṁśā, to which a reference has been made above and under which name the Harivaṁśa once refers to the Great Goddess in the myth of Kṛśṇa's birth. The *Mahābhārata* identifies her with Kuhu,[81] and the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* describes her images in a manner which agrees with her being a sister of Saṁkarṣaṇa and Kṛṣṇa.[82] Whatever, may be the significance of her name, she may be presumed to have been a fairly popular goddess in our period, because it is not only in Viṣṇuite myths that she makes her appearance but also in purely Śivaite ones where she is regarded as identical with Pārvatī.[83] As we have seen, she appears in the list of popular goddesses also in the *Aṅgavijjā*.[84] Since the *Harivaṁśa* provides the additional information that the so-called divine daughter of Yaśodā, when released from Kaṁsa's grasp, was adored by the Vṛṣṇis and brought up like a son,[85] it has been suggested that she was originally a tutelary goddess of this tribe, and that this may perhaps provide additional evidence of matriarchal traits in the Vṛṣṇis.[86]

The exact significance of the name Āryā also should be regarded as uncertain. It might only suggest the high and noble status of the Great Goddess in brahmanical circles, or, alternatively, point to the popular goddess Āryā who appears in the *Mahābhārata* as a Bāla-graha transformed into a deity interested in children's welfare.[87] The latter suggestion is strengthened by the fact that of the several similar deities mentioned in the same context in the *Mahābhārata*, the reference to Āryā is perhaps the most complementary. It has been suggested that both Kauśikī and Kātyāyanī point to the tutelary goddesses of the brahmanical families of the Kuśika and Kātyāyana *gotras* respectively.[88] But the name Kauśikī could also have come through Indra who bears the epithet *Kuśika* in the *Ṛg-veda*[89] and is closely connected with the Goddess in the myth of Kṛṣṇa's birth.[90] The source of Kātyāyanī, as of several other names of the Goddess, including Kālī as noted above, has also been traced back to the Vedic Fire-god and his identification with Rudra.[91] Whether the names Śākambharī and Bhrāmarī point to the Vedic goddesses Pṛthivī, Ilā, *etc.*, as has sometimes been

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81. *Mbh.*, III. 208.8:

    Yāṁ tu dṛṣṭvā bhagavatīṁ janaḥ kuhukuhāyate,
    Ekānaṁśeti yāmāhuḥ kuhūmaṅgirasaḥ sutām.

82. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 57.37-9. On the goddess *Ekānaṁśa*-see Ghosh, Jogendra Chandra, "Ekānaṁśā and Subhadrā", *JRASB*, *L*, (3rd series), II, 1936, pp. 41 ff.; Mukherji, Shyam Chand, "The Cult of Ekānaṁśā", *IHQ*, XXXV, no. 3, Sept. 1959, pp. 189 ff.; and Gupta, Parameshwari Lal, "Ekānaṁśā and Her Images", *JBRS*, LIV, 1968, pts. 1-4, pp. 229-44.
83. See *Mat. P.*, 154.74.
84. See above, Ch. I.
85. *Hv.*, 96.13 ff.
86. See Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇvaism*, pp. 66 ff.
87. See above, Ch. I.
88. See Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 142, 144.
89. *Rv.*, I. 10.11.
90. See above; also *Hv.*, 47.46-7.
91. See Weber as cited in Muir, *OST*, IV, p. 427.

suggested,[92] may not be quite certain.[93] But the two may have been independent goddesses. At least the former finds a prominent mention in the Tīrthayātra section in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, and the same text also refers to the sacred place of Bhīmā somewhere in the north-western regions of the country.[94] The name Kumārī, as noted above, may denote a virgin goddess, although in the context of the Great Goddess, it was probably used in a moral sense.[95] In any case, it does seem to have some connection with various tīrthas bearing names such as Kumārī, Kanyā, *etc.*[96]

Since the Great Goddess bears many names in the eulogies, the exercise of tracing the various names to possible independent goddess concepts can be carried on much further. But it is hardly necessary. A part from the fact that several names given to the Goddess, such as Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, *etc.*, are those of known independent goddesses, there are many others which, as noted above, may be only poetic and descriptive epithets. Again, even if some names may be pointed out as having independent histories, it would still be pointless to pick them out if they do not lead to goddesses who may be supposed to have had a popular cult. Personifications of various mental and moral qualities, generally speaking, may be said to belong to this group.

A few words may be said also about the myth of the Goddess killing the Buffalo-demon, which is not only constantly alluded to in literature but would also appear from the sculptural evidence, to be noticed below, as the most characteristic element in the concept of the Goddess. The origin of this myth is very obscure. The *Mahābhārata*, attributes the killing of Mahiṣāsura to Skanda-Kārttikeya,[97] and Quackenbos has imagined on this basis that the Goddess either usurped the fame originally belonging to her son, or Mahiṣa, once killed by Skanda, was obligingly reborn to be slaughtered again at the hands of the Goddess.[98] The latter, of course, is not an alternative but only a rationalization of the former hypothesis. Solitary instances may be found in the Purāṇic literature also where Skanda appears as the killer of the Buffalo-demon,[99] but the feat is almost unanimously the prerogative of the Goddess and, what is even more important, no other deity except the Goddess is ever credited with it in iconography. Considering the force of this tradition, there is an even greater likelihood that Skanda-Kārttikeya obtained this feature from his supposed mother. It is not possible to say what is the origin and original significance of this myth. Kosambi has made a tentative suggestion that Śiva himself or some equivalent of him might originally have been the Buffalo-demon. The myth might thus be related to some historical conflict between the cult of this deity and that of the mother goddesses. In support of his hypothesis, he points to the horned headdresss of the three-faced god seated in the yogic posture on the well known Mohenjodaro seal showing buffalo horns, and to a pastoral god called Mhasoba currently in worship at Poona and in the surrounding area. The latter god must be regarded as Mahiṣāsura, who is not only worshipped sometimes in close proximity of a Devī shrine but is also married to some local goddesses who are regarded as forms of Durgā-Pārvatī. Kosambi also connects his hypothesis with the form of Devī in which she tramples upon a lifeless Śiva.[100] Since the horns in the Mohenjodaro seal noted above appear to be ridged at regular intervals or twisted,[101] they could represent buffalo-horns, although this by itself need not prove the seated deity wearing the horned headdress to be a Buffalo-deity.[102] Also, if the appearance of animals on the Indus Valley seals has some religious significance, as is often supposed, especially in cases where the animal is also associated with symbols or utensils which may have religious significance, it is possible that the buffalo too was regarded as a sacred animal by the Indus Valley people.[103] But all this provides no definite evidence for Kosambi's thesis. A hypothetical cult of a Buffalo-god, analogous to Rudra-Śiva, in the Indus Valley culture, is too vague and too far separated to be easily connected with the motif of the Goddess killing the Buffalo-demon. Also, this characteristic myth of the Goddess as narrated in the *Purāṇas* contains no suggestion whatever, of the identity of Mahiṣa with Śiva. The late motif of the Goddess trampling a lifeless Śiva should be connected with the Tantric concepts of some fierce forms of the Goddess which were supposed to be seated on corpses,[104] and perhaps ultimately with the Goddess symbolizing the life and energy in her consort Śiva without which he is as good as dead. We also consider it a little risky to use such thin modern anthropological data, as Kosambi has done, to explain a popular ancient myth. It is quite possible that this animal adversary of the Goddess simply symbolized darkness and death. This would agree with the literary and iconographic motif of Yama, the god of death, having a buffalo as his *vāhana*.[105] On the other hand, the myth may simply be connected with the sacrifice of buffaloes to the Goddess.[106] But, whatever may be the origin of the myth, it is certain that in the classical Hinduism of the *Purāṇas*, the killing of the Buffalo-demon was the special prerogative of the Goddess and it was in this form that she was generally recognized in iconography.

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[92] See Dikshit, *The Mother Goddess*, p. 85; Das Gupta, Shashi Bhusan, "Evolution of Mother Worship in India", in Madhavanand and Majumdar (ed.), *Great Women of India*, pp. 54-5.

[93] On the nature of the real contribution of the Vedic brahmanical tradition to the concept of the Great Goddess, see below.

[94] See above, Ch. I, the discussion of goddesses associated with Tirthas.

[95] As applied to the Goddess the word must have a wider sense than that of virginity. Cf. Hartmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Gottin Lakṣmī*, p. 36.

[96] See above, Ch. I.

[97] *Mbh.*, III. 221.52 ff., esp. 65-6; IX. 45.65.

[98] Quackenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra*, pp. 247-9.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 249, fn. 1; see also *Vām. P.*, 32.86 ff., esp. 109. It may be noted that the same *Purāṇa* describes in considerable detail the destruction of Mahiṣa by the Goddess; see esp. *Vām. P.*, ch. 21.

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[100] Kosambi, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 2-3, 28, 90-1, 122.

[101] For the Mohenjodaro seal under reference, see Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pl. XII. 17.

[102] The horned headdress as a sacred symbol or emblem of divinity was popular in contemporary Sumer and Babylonia. The specialized meaning that Kosambi gives this headdress on the Mohejodaro seal is very unlikely; see Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 54-5.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[104] See Banerjea, J.N., in Majumdar (ed.), *History of Bengal*, I, p. 455; also, by the same author, *DHI*, pp. 274, 507-8.

[105] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 525.

[106] This may be implied in the frequent references to the offerings of animal flesh to the Goddess. By this time the sanctity of the cow was well established.

An important question is when this highly syncretistic concept and cult of the Great Goddess evolved. This touches upon the dating of the epic, Purāṇic and similar materials about the Goddess as analysed above. There seems little dispute about the dating of *Gaūḍavaho* and *Caṇḍī-śataka*. Since Vākpati-rāja was a court poet of Yaśovarman of Kanauj, his *Gaūḍavaho* may be dated to the middle of the 8th century A.D.[107] Also, since Vākpati, in this Prakrit poem, presents vivid pictures of rural life and locates the Goddess' shrine in the Vindhya region, it seems natural that he produces a gruesome picture of it since the region was populated by aboriginal tribes who were much feared by the inhabitants of more settled areas.[108] The ascription of *Caṇḍī-śataka* to Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the author of *Harṣa-carita* and *Kādambarī* and contemporary of king Harṣa of Sthāṇvīśvara and Kanauj, is also generally accepted, even though this work is in poorer style than others by the same author.[109] So the evolution of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess may be presumed to have been an accomplished fact by the beginning of the 7th century A.D. The dates of the epic-Purāṇic materials are uncertain. The most important is the *Devī-māhātmya* which may be regarded as the principal text of the cult of the Great Goddess. It has been clearly demonstrated by Pargiter that the requirement of the continuity of narratives in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* suggests that the *Devī-māhātmya*, which is a complete poem by itself and quite unconnected with the Purāṇic text in which it is embedded, is a later interpolation. Also, since the earliest manuscript of this poem is datable to the 9th century A.D., it must have been completed before that time. According to Pargiter, it was probably composed in the 5th-6th century A.D.[110] Winternitz, Hazra and others have fully endorsed this dating.[111] Pargiter also added that, on consideration of the close association of the Goddess with Śiva, whose worship was particularly popular during the period in the western part of the country, the *Devī-māhātmya* is likely to have been composed in this general region.[112] On the basis of the choice of the two motifs, Śeṣa-śāyi Viṣṇu and Mahiṣamardinī, together in the same shrine, the Mahiṣamardinī Maṇḍapa at Māmallapuram, it has been inferred that the cantos 81 and 82 of the *Devī-māhātmya* in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* must have been completed before the second half of the 7th century A.D.[113] Again, on the basis of the parallelisms between the iconographic motifs described in the text and actual sculptural illustrations, and also on the basis of several other motifs, linguistic usages and the general religious background, Agrawala dated the text to the Gupta period.[114] Iconographic parallelisms may not be wholly reliable guides for dating because textual descriptions could also be imagined as based on popular iconographic patterns. But, as noted above, an early 7th century A.D. inscription from Rajasthan quotes a verse from the *Devī-māhātmya*, and happily, this verse expresses succinctly the salient characteristics of the Great Goddess.[115] The *Devī-māhātmya*, therefore, must have been completed sometime before the close of 6th century A.D., and may have been in existence towards the later part of the Gupta period.

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[107] See Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 150-1; Dasgupta and De (ed.), *A History of Sanskrit Literature : Classical Period*, vol. I, p. 279; also Majumdar in Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 326.

[108] See Keith, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-1.

[109] See Dasgupta and De, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-1.

[110] *Mār. P.*, tr. Pargiter, Intro., pp. vi-vii, x-xiii, xx.

[111] See Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. I, pt. II, pp. 495-6 and p. 495, fn. 3; Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records, etc.*, pp. 12-3.

[112] *Mār. P.*, tr. Pargiter, Intro., pp. xi-xiii. While Pargiter's general inference in the form noted above is very acceptable to us, we feel that his specification of Māndhāta in the Narmada region as the place of origin of the poem is not adequately supported.

The dating of the *Devī-māhātmya* in the 5th-6th century A.D. facilitates the use of similar epic and Purāṇic materials for our purpose. Thus, even though the evidence of manuscripts has proved that the hymns to Durgā by Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna were interpolated into the *Mahābhārata* at a later date, as were the *Āryā-stava* and a few similar hymns in the *Harivaṁśa*, we feel justified in making use of them because, as source materials, they clearly fall in the same class as the *Devī-māhātmya* and make no significant additions to the concept of the Great Goddess as presented in that text.[116]

The evidence of inscribed records and incidental references in secular literature also confirm that the concept and cult of the Great Goddess must have evolved by the

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113. Srinivasian, K.R., *Cave Temples of the Pallavas*, pp. 154-5 also p. 155, fn. 3; Seshadri, M., "Mahiṣāsuramardinī: Images, Iconography and Interpretation", *The Half-yearly Journal of the Mysore University*, sec. A—Arts, XXII, no. 2, 1963, pp. 3-4. These authors refer to the edition of the text translated by Pargiter. The chapters 81 and 82 of this text correspond to 78 and 79 of the Veṅkateśvara Steam Press edition used by us.

114. Agrawala, V.S., "The *Devī-māhātmya*", *JIH*, XLII, 1964, pp. 826ff.

115. See Bhandarkar, D.R., "Epigraphic Notes and Questions: VI-The Date of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*", *JBBRAS*, XXIII, 1909-14, pp. 73-4; Ram Karna, "Dadhimātī-mātā Inscription of the time of Druhlāṇa; (Gupta-) Samvat 289", *EI*, XI, pp. 299 ff. and also p. 303, fn. 1 by Sten Konow. The verse contained in the lines 11-12 of the inscription, which is also seen in the *Devī-māhātmya* (*Mār. P.*, 88-9) runs as :

    Sarva-maṅgala-māṅgalye śive sarvārtha sādhike,
    Śaraṇye tryambake gauri nārāyaṇi namostu te.

    Bhandarkar read the date of the inscription as corresponding to 608 A.D.V.V. Mirashi is the only scholar to our knowledge who has doubted this dating, on grounds of orthography: he reads the date as corresponding to 813 A.D. He does not, however, question the dating of the *Devī-māhātmya*; see Mirashi, "A Lower Limit for the Date of the *Devi-māhātmya*", *Purāṇa*, VI, pt. 1, Jan. 1964, pp. 181-4.

116. Cf. the following statement by Winternitz in his review of Utgikar's edition of the *Virāṭa-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, in *ABORI*, V, pt.I, 1923-24, p. 24:

    Now Utgikar has proved that by the unmistakable evidence of the MSS. the Durgāstotra is a late interpolation in the *Virāṭa-parvan*, and has to be excluded from the text altogether. Utgikar (p. xxii) is perfectly right in saying that no absolutely certain historical argument could have proved the Durgāstotra to be an interpolation, while the evidence of the MSS. is an absolute proof."

Gupta period and soon become quite popular. The earliest inscription clearly suggesting such a cult comes from Choṭī Sādṛī in the erstwhile Udaipur State in Rajasthan. It was discovered in the sanctum of the modern temple of Bhawarmata and is dated in the [Vikrama-] year 547=491 A.D.[117] It opens with an invocation to the Goddess called Devī, who is described as one who bears a sharp spear that tears asunder the demon, *Asura* (probably Mahiṣāsura) or demons, whose rapidity is impetuous owing to her being seated in a chariot to which is yoked a fierce lion (or lions), whose anger is concentrated in her frowning glances, who, out of her devotedness, assumes half of the body of moon-crested Hara, and who, out of kindness to the devotees sustains the worlds like a mother full of tenderness arising from her affection for her own children.[118] The purpose of the inscription is to record that a certain Mahārāja Gauri, desirous of the grace of the Goddess, built a palatial shrine for her. Several other inscriptions which may be related to the cult of the Great Goddess belong to a later period (6th-7th century A.D., generally the latter), and they come from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. Thus, of the two inscriptions of the Maukharī king Anantavarman (6th cent. A.D.) in the Nagarjuni hill caves (Bihar), one refers to the installation of the images of Bhutapati and Devī; and the other, opening with an invocation to the Goddess as Mahiṣamardinī, records the installation of Katyāyanī in the *vindhya-bhūdhara-guhā*, and also the grant of a village for the Goddess, here called Bhavānī.[119] The Vasantgadh inscription of Varmalāta, which was discovered outside the modern shrine of Khimal Mātā (erstwhile Sirohi State, Rajasthan) and is dated in the (Vikrama) year 682=625 A.D., opens with an invocation to Durgā and Kṣemāryā, and records the building of a shrine for the Goddess, described as *Jaganmātā*, by a *gosthī* or an association of persons including a woman who is specified as Śrī-mātā-gaṇikā-būṭānāmnī.[120] The Sakrai stone inscription was discovered at Sakrai, in erstwhile Jaipur State in Rajasthan, which is reputed for its modern temple of the goddess Śākambharī. It is dated in the (Vikrama) year 699=642-3 A.D. It opens with an invocation to Mahāgaṇapati, Caṇḍikā and Dhanada, and records the construction of a *maṇḍapa* in front of (the shrine of) the goddess Śaṅkarā by an association of bankers.[121] The Cāmuṇḍā image inscription comes from Jaipur (Orissa) and, though undated, is also paleographically assigned to the first half of the 7th century A.D. It records the dedication of the image by the queen Vatsadevī.[122] A stone inscription from Kudārkoṭ (Etawah Distt., U.P.), also undated but paleographically assigned to the latter half of the 7th century A.D., actually records the erection of a building for brāhmaṇas, but opens with an invocation to Durgā, who is imagined as the consort of Śiva and is said to be accompanied by her lion and Kārttikeya.[123] An inscription comes also from the vicinity of Vārāṇasī and this too is paleographically dated in the opening of the 8th century. It opens with praise of Vārāṇasī and records the building of a shrine of Bhavānī, who is described as fierce on account of her garland of human heads, etc.[124] In all the above cases, the goddess referred to must be identified as the Great Goddess. This is evident from their names, descriptions of their form and various mythological allusions. Reference has also been made above to the possibility of a local family goddess in Rajasthan in the 7th Century A.D., the goddess Dadhimātī, being regarded as identical with or as a form of the Great Goddess.

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[117] See Sircar, D.C., "Two inscriptions of Gauri : 1. Chhoṭī Sādṛī Inscription, year 547", *EI*, XXX, pp. 120ff.

[118] *Ibid.*, lines 1-3 of the inscription. The corrected invocatory verses as read by the editor are :

Devī jayaty=asura-dāraṇa-tīkṣṇa-śūlāḥ
prodgīrṇṇa-ratna-makuṭ-āṁśu-cala-pravāhā,
Siṁh-ogra-yukta-ratham=āsthita-caṇḍa-vegāḥ
bhrūbhaṅga-dṛṣṭi-vinipāta-niviṣṭa-roṣā 1
Bhūyo=pi sā jayati yā śaśiśekharasya,
dehārddham=udvahati bhaktatayā harasya,
Yā bhakta-vatsalatayā prabibhartti lokān
māt=eva svākya-suta-prema-vivṛddha-snehā. 2

[119] See Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 223ff. and 226ff.

[120] Bhandarkar, D.R., "Vasantgadh Inscription of Varmalāta, *etc.*," *EI*, IX, pp. 187 ff. Kṣemāryā or Kṣemaṅkarī was the berevolent aspect of Mahiṣamardinī Durgā and it seems that she had a very popular cult in Rajasthan between the 7th and 10th centuries A. D.; see Dhaky, M.A., "Kṣemaṅkrī-the Cult Image of the Ambikā Temple", *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, Vol. 6, 1968, pp. 117-20; and by the same author, "*The Iconography of Sacciyā Devī*", in *Babu Chhotelalji Jain Commemoration Volume*, pp. 63ff.

Similar is the case of various incidental statements in literature. Such statements have been taken to refer to the Great Goddess because they use her principal names, although in some cases at least the deity referred to may be no more than a local or tribal goddess who has assumed a literary colour and donned a superior garb.[125] The references to Kātyāyanī in the dramas of Bhāsa must be related to the cult of Mahādevī because they are either in clear allusion to some well known myth connected with the Great Goddess, such as her role in the myth of Kṛṣṇa's birth and in the destruction of the demons Śumbha, Niśumbha and Mahiṣa, or relate the goddess to Śiva.[126] The same should be imagined of Kātyāyanī whose shrine in Kusumapura

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[121] See Chhabra, B. Ch., "Sakrai Stone Inscription, *etc.*," *EI*, XXVII, pp. 27 ff.

[122] See Sircar, D.C., "Two Inscriptions from Jaypur : B. Chāmuṇḍā Image Inscription of Vatsadevī", *EI*, XXVIII, pp. 184-5.

[123] See Kielhorn, F., "A Stone Inscription from Kudārkoṭ (Gavīdhumat)", *EI*, I, pp. 179 ff.

[124] See Sahni, Daya Ram. "Benares Inscription of Bantha", *EI*, IX, pp. 59ff.

[125] We have omitted any mention of the goddess Madirā, provision for whose shrine, along with those of several other deities, in the centre of the fortified town, is made in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya. It has sometimes been suggested that she may be the same as the goddess Durgā-Kālī, but we regard it as doubtful; see *Arthaśāstra*, ed. Kangle, 2. 4. 17, and note on it in *ibid.*, tr. Kangle, p. 80, where the opinion of Meyer is also cited. It is uncertain whether the goddess bears any relationship with Surā, Vāruṇī, *etc.*, mentioned in other texts; see above, Ch. I, p. 16, fn.

[126] *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakram*, ed. Devadhar, pp. 532 ff. (*Bāla-carita*, Act II). Kaṁsa describes the goddess as :

Tīkṣṇāgraṁ śūlamālambya raudra-veṣeṇa jṛmbhate,
Vināśakāle samprāpte kālarātririvotthitā.

The goddess Kātyāyanī identifies herself as :

Śumbhaṁ nisumbhaṁ mahiṣaṁ ca hatvā kṛtvā surāṁsṭān hata-śatru-pakṣān,
Ahaṁ prasūtā vasudeva-vaṁśe kārtyāyanī (sic) kaṁsa-kula-kṣayāya.

(Contd.)

(Pāṭaliputra) is referred to in the *Vāsavadattā* of Subandhu, because the goddess is described as the killer of the demons Suṁbha, Niśuṁbha and Mahiṣa.[127] In the *Mṛcchakaṭika*, Durgā appears only in the modest role of the family deity of the caṇḍāla executioners of Cārudatta, but her name as well as the epithet Sahyavāsinī necessitate her identification as the Great Goddess.[128] However, the goddess Vindhyavāsinī Durgā occupies a very prominent place in the *Daśakumāra-carita*. In one place, the text refers to the goddess granting a son and a daughter to a king, and this daughter later worshipping the goddess by means of *Kanduka-nṛtya* very month on the Kṛttikā day from the age of seven to the day of her marriage, in order to obtain a suitable husband.[129] In another place, where also there is a conspicuous mention of the shrine of the same goddess as well as her image, the popular belief in the greatness of the goddess and her suppossed instructions to a certain person in a dream are utilized as important props in the continuity of the story.[130]

Bhagavatī Gaurī, her shrine and her worship occupy a prominent place in the Sanskrit drama *Nāgānanda*. Both Malayavatī and Jīmūtavāhana address prayers to the goddess and ask for her grace, and the goddess is credited with reviving Jīmūtavāhana.[131] Bāṇabhaṭṭa describes in his *Harṣacarita* how he crossed the Caṇḍikā-kānana to reach the village Mallakūṭa on his journey to the court of Harṣa. Here, in this forest, the figures of the goddess Kātyāyanī were carved on the trees and travellers used to pay obeisance to them.[132] Agrawala has suggested that this forest must be located somewhere between the rivers Son and Ganges in Shahabad District in Bihar.[133] The reference to the Caṇḍikā temple and its chief Draviḍa priest in a lengthy degression in the

See also *ibid.*,p. 83 (*Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa*, Act III) where a reference is made to a Śiva temple in Ujjayinī which had in it the icons of Śiva, his consort Lohita-Kātyāyanī and son Brahmacārī (Skanda-kumāra). Incidentally, the fact that the dramas of Bhāsa also choose the theme of Kṛṣṇa's birth and refer to the role of Devī in the destruction of Kaṁsa, suggests a late date for them, closer to Śūdraka and Kālidāsa than to Pāṇini as has sometimes been suggested. On the date of Bhāsa, see Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Preface, pp. xii ff.; Mehendale, M.A., in Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 261.

127. *Vāsavadattā*, tr. Gray, p. 77. The text translated by Gray characterises the goddess as *Vetālā*, but the Telugu and Srirangam editions replace the epithet by *Caṇḍā*; see *ibid.*, p. 77, fn. 4 and p. 161. It may be added that this text also alludes to the myth of the Goddess killing the Buffalo-demon in figurative descriptions of the sunset and the evening twilight; see *ibid.*, pp. 94, 97, 152, 158.
128. *Mṛcchakaṭika*, Act X, NSP. edn., p. 282.
129. *Daśakumāra-carita*, 6th *Ucchvāsa*, pp. 207 ff.
130. *Ibid.*, 8th *Ucchvāsa*, pp. 273 ff.. It may be added that in its prescriptions relating to the rites of Truth, the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* refers to the worship of *Ugra* (lit. "powerful", "fierce") deities, and the *Mitākṣarā* commentary explains it as referring to Durgā, *etc.*; see *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, II, 112-3 and Vijñāneśvara's commentary thereon.
131. *Nāgānanda*; ed. Toraskar and Deshpande, pp. 18 ff., 36, 50 ff., 158 ff.
132. *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 2nd *Ucchvāsa*, p. 26.

    Prathame' hani…pathika-jana-namaskariyamāṇa-praveśa-pādapotkīrṇa-kātyāyanī-pratiyātanaṁ…śanaiś-caṇḍikā-kānanam-atikramya mallakūṭa-nāmānaṁ grāmamāgāt.
133. Agrawala, *Harṣacarita-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 36.

Kādambarī of Bāṇa must be related to the cult of the Great Goddess.[134] Although the description is full of uncanny elements and the goddess Caṇḍikā has all the appearance of a fierce local and tribal goddess,[135] her conspicuous mention and the meticulous, ornate description of her form, her shrine and her chief priest are clearly inspired by the popular Mahā-devi cult.[136] The same text refers also to the queen Vilāsavati, aspiring for a son, performing worship in the shrine of Caṇḍikā by burning *guggula*, fasting and sleeping on an uncomfortable, prickly bed.[137]

The modest Cāmuṇḍā-maṇḍapa in a forest settlement of aboriginal people that Harṣa is said to have seen in the Vindhya region, according to the *Harṣacarita*,[138] could simply be the shrine of a local, tribal deity but the goddess Cāmuṇḍā of the drama *Mālatī-mādhava* by Bhavabhūti is a very impressive figure[139] and should be regarded as an aspect of the Great Goddess. Perhaps a goddess of independent origin, Cāmuṇḍa is invriably included in the popular group of the Sapta-or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās, and, identified with Kālī, she is regarded as an emanation of the Great Goddess in the *Devī-māhātmya*.[140] Similarly, while the Goddess Ambā worshipped by Vilāsavatī, as mentioned in the *Kādambarī*,[141] may be a local deity, the goddess Ambikā of the *Gaṇapatikalpa-prakaraṇa* in the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* is obviously the same as her namesake in the *Devi-māhātmya*.[142]

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[134] *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, pp. 452-63. Candrāpīḍa is said to have seen this temple and performed his worship there on his way to Ujjayinī. Agrawala felt that it is probably the same forest and shrine which is referred to as Caṇḍikākānana in the *Harṣacarita* (see above); see Agrawala, *Kādambarī-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhayana*, p. 223, fn. 2. The route taken by Candrāpīḍa is not very clear, but it seems very unlikely that this Caṇḍikā shrine of *Kādambarī* is located in modern Bihar.

[135] Cf. Payne, *The Śāktas*, p. 68.

[136] With the Draviḍa priest of the Caṇḍikā temple in the *Kādambarī*, cf. the statement in the *Harṣacarita* that among the various rites being performed to cure Harṣa's father, there was an Andhra man holding up his arms like a rampart to conciliate Caṇḍikā; see *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 5th *Ucchvāsa*. p. 21 :

Kvacidāndhroddhriyamāṇa-bāhu-vapropayācyamāna-caṇḍikām….

See also *ibid.*, tr. Cowell and Thomas, p. 135.

[137] *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, p. 144 :

Anavarata-dahyamāna-gaggulu-bahula-dhūmāndha-kāriteṣu
caṇḍikā-gṛheṣu dhavalāmbareṇa śuci-mūrtiruposītā
harita-kuśopacchadeṣu musala-śayaneṣu suṣvāpa.

[138] *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 7th *Ucchvāsa*, p. 68.

[139] *Mālatī-mādhava*, ed. Kale, Act. V, pp. 94 ff.

[140] See below, ch. III.

[141] *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, p. 145:

Aparimita-kusuma-dhūpavilepāpūpa-palala-pāyasa-bali-lāja-kalitāmaharaharambādevī-saparyāmātatāna.

It may be noted that "Jyeṣṭhā-devī" appears sometimes as a variant of "Ambā-devī".

[142] *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, I. 286-91, Ambikā is here called *Vināyakasya jananī*. According to the prescription laid down, the offerings to the goddess, including raw and coocked meat and fish, are to be made in a winnowing basket at the crossroads, with the prayer to give beauty, fame, prosperity, progeny, wealth and satisfaction of all desires.

It is clear from the evidence presented above that the cult of the Great Goddess becomes recognizable from the Gupta period onwards. How far back its history can be traced depends upon the identification of the central element in the concept of the Great Goddess. In other words, the crucial question to answer is what is the nucleus around which the concept developed, or, to be more precise, who is the goddess who achieved prominence and popularity enough to absorb other smaller goddesses and inspire poems and eulogies painting her as the Supreme Deity, the Supreme Power, the final refuge, the origin and end of the world, *etc.* The concept of the Supreme Goddess was not a mechanical product or a purely literary motif. The evidence of secular literature and inscribed records proves that it had a real cult as its basis.

Several authors have examined the question of the origin of the Great Goddess of classical Hinduism. It is impossible to be exhaustive in our references to them,[143] but we may present the representative lines of enquiry in a very rough historiographical manner, adding our own comments about their validity and limitations.

At an early stage, the main source of the Great Goddess, like that of many other elements of classical Hinduism of the epics and the *Purāṇas,* was traced back to the hymns of the *Ṛg-veda.* Emphasizing the philosophical content as against the Goddess of the cult, Wilson imagined that the worship of the female principle "originated in the literal interpratation of the metaphysical language of the Vedas in which the will and purpose to create the universe is represented as originating from the Creator, and co-existent with him as his consort".[144] This tendency is still very much alive, especially among those who emphasize the esoteric and symbolic elements in the Śākta-Tantric teachings and point to their possible Vedic sources.[145] As will be seen below, while a Vedic brahmanical element is apparent in the concept of the Goddess, it seems to provide only a superstructure, a philosophical framework for what is non-Vedic and unbrahmanical at its core.

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[143] On the origin and development of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess, we refer particularly to the following: Wilson, *The Religious Sects of the Hindus*, pp. 135 ff., Muir, *OST*, IV, pp. 420 ff., 497 ff., where the opinion of Weber is also extensively reproduced; Oppert, *The Original Inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa*, pp. 397 ff., Jacobi, H., "Brahmanism", *ERE*, 2, p. 813; by the same author, "Durgā", *Ibid.*, 5, pp. 117 ff.; Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism etc.*, pp. 142 ff.; Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 224 ff.; Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 49 ff.; Chanda, *The Indo-Aryan Races* ch. IV: Race and Cult-Śāktism, and P.C. Bagchi's comments on this, in Majumdar (ed.), *History of Bengal*, Vol.I (Hindu Period), pp. 406-7; Renou, in Renou and Filliozat *L,Inde Classique*, esp. pp. 519-20, 522-4; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 311-2; Norman Brown, W., "Mythologies of India," in Kramer (ed.), *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, pp. 309 ff.; Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 488 ff., Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, II, pp. 1. ff. (which incorporates, with minor changes, by the same author, "Compilation of Purāṇic Works or Chapters on Śakti Worship", *Our Heritage*, IV, Pt. I, 1956, pp. 67 ff.): Gonda *Die Religionen Indiens*, I, pp. 258 ff.; II, pp. 208 ff..

[144] Wilson, *The Religious Sects of the Hindus*, pp. 136-7. Wilson pointed to the Sāṁkhya conception of Prakṛti also as another source; *Ibid.*

[145] The writings of M.P. Pandit on Tantric religion are good illustrations of this approach, but its best earlier representative is Sir John Woodroffe, who also wrote under the pseudonym Arthur Avalon.

A large majority of other scholars have pointed specifically to the consort of Rudra-Śiva as the real source of the Goddess. Perhaps the most representative and quite an early opinion of this type is that of Weber, who traced the source of the Goddess to various feminine deities associated with Rudra in the Vedic literature and, at the same time, to various other concepts that this Vedic god obtained through his identification with Agni.[146] He pointed out not only that Kālī and Karālī, which appear later as names of the Great Goddess, are names of tongues or flames of the Fire-god in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, but that the names Durgā, Kātyāyanī and Kumārī may also point to the same source.[147] The latter suggestions are quite doubtful, but Weber's general explanation has never been really doubted. It may be added that Weber did not greatly interest himself in this context in the determination of Vedic or non-Vedic elements in the concept.

From an equally early stage again, and even before any archaeological evidence had entered into the picture, it was suspected that various non-Aryan and non-Vedic cults helped the formation of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess. Opinions, however, differ on the nature and extent of this contribution. We cite two representative instances: Bhandarkar traced the history of the cult of Devī or Śakti through the history of the consort of Rudra-Śiva and accepted that, just as in the case of Rudra himself in earlier times, so also in the case of his consort later, an aboriginal element made its contribution in the form of goddesses of forests and mountains worshipped by wild tribes and demanding animal and human offerings.[148] Oppert, on the other hand, asserted that the worship of Devī or Śakti, "the principle of Female Energy", was wholly a contribution of the original non-Aryan inhabitants of the land, whom he identified as Gauḍa-Dravidians.[149] His main arguments were that goddesses occupied an insignificant position in Vedic myths and rituals whereas they are still very popular with the Dravidians of South India, that eulogies to the Great Goddess in the epic and the *Purāṇas* distinctly point to non-Aryan elements in her character and, lastly, that Umā and Ambā or Ambikā, two of the principal names of the Goddess, are most likely derived from the Dravidian word *Amma*, meaning "mother."[150] Oppert's vigorous exposition appears to have strongly influenced later writings on the subject and his derivation of the names Umā and Ambikā have been frequently endorsed.[151]

The archaeological discoveries of the Indus Valley culture have greatly strengthened the hypothesis outlined above. It is now generally accepted, perhaps a little too

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146. See Weber as cited in Muir, *OST*, IV, pp. 421 ff.
147. *Ibid.*, pp. 425 ff. . *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, I. 2.4 gives the names of the seven tongues of Agni (see Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣadas*, p. 675). As also noted earlier, the authenticity of this reference has sometimes been doubted; see Belvalkar and Ranade, *The Creative Period*, p. 94.
148. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 142 ff., esp. 144. Jacobi expressed similar opinions; see Jacobi, *op. cit.*
149. Oppert, *The Original Inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa*, Preface, p. viii and pp. 397 ff.
150. *Ibid.*, p. 421.
151. See Hopkins, *EM*, p. 226; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 199-200; *etc.*; also Caldwell, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*, pp. 613-4.

readily,[152] that a cult of the Mother Goddess or Earth Goddess formed the popular household religion in the chalcolithic culture of the Indus Valley.[153] The main argument for this hypothesis is the discovery of numerous terracotta figurines of an almost nude female from practically all over the excavated areas of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and also from many other Indus Valley sites. These "have no clear counterparts in the seals or major sculptures."[154] It has been argued that the remarkable frequency of the occurrence of these figures, their general resemblance to one another, their elaborate headdress and rich jewellery, all indicate that they portray a goddess. More specifically, it has been pointed out that the cup-shaped appendages on either side of the fan-like headdress in several specimens are smoke-stained, suggesting that oil or little pellets of incense were burned in them to propitiate the goddess. Marshall pointed also to an oblong sealing from Harappa depicting on the one side an upside-down and apparently nude female with a plant-like object issuing from her womb and, on the other, the figures of a man and a woman, the former standing with a sickle-shaped weapon in his hand and the latter seated with the hands raised in an attitude of supplication. He believed that this sealing provided evidence of the cult of the Earth or Mother Goddess and possibly of human sacrifice connected with it.[155] Some modern scholars have been particularly impressed by this evidence and regard it as clear testimony to Marshall's overall hypothesis about the terracotta females.[156] To some others, the more decisive indications are the depictions of pregnant females.[157]

Marshall produced some indirect arguments also in support of his hypothesis. Firstly, he pointed out that female statuettes akin to those found on the Indus Valley sites were also reported in large numbers from various contemporary cultures in West Asia and were generally regarded as representations of the Great Mother or Nature Goddess.[158] Secondly, he argued, like Oppert, that whereas there was no evidence that goddesses occupied a prominent position in the religious life of the Vedic Aryans, they

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152. See Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 91; also below, p. 122. A recent and excellent warning against hasty interpretations of prehistoric figurines has been sounded by Ucko, who demonstrates through an analysis of the Cretan figurines that even though a Mother Goddess may have been worshipped in neolithic Crete, the anthropomorphic figurines from Knossos did not appear to present any corroborative evidence of such a cult; see Ucko, Peter J., "The Interpretation of Prehistoric Anthropomorphic Figurines", *JRAI*, XCII, pts. I and II, 1962, pp. 38 ff..
153. For this and the following statements about the so-called cult of the Mother Goddess in the Indus Valley culture, see esp. Marshall (ed), *MIC*, I, pp. 49 ff., 338 ff.; Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, pp. 107 ff.; 128 ff., 203-4; Mackay, *Early Indus Civilizations*, pp. 53 ff.; Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, pp. 91, 109; also, Sullivan, Herbert P., "A Re-examination of the Religion of the Indus Civilization", *HR*, 4, 1964, pp. 115 ff..
154. See Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
155. Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, pp., 52 and pl. XII. 12.
156. See Sullivan, *op. cit.*, *HR*, 4, p. 117.
157. See *e.g.*, Norman Brown, *op. cit.*, in Kramer (ed.), *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, p. 310. For the terracotta female figurines suggesting pregnancy, see Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, p. 49: Wheeler, *op. cit.*, pp. 91, 109.
158. Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, p. 50.

were conspicuous in later Hinduism, where they appeared as local manifestations of the Great Mother Goddess. This, according to him, strengthened the possibility that a cult of the Great Mother Goddess was very popular in the Indus Valley culture, from where it gradually permeated the religious life of the Vedic Aryans.[159]

In his reconstruction of the cult of the Mother Goddess in the Indus Valley culture and also the near contemporary village cultures in the neighbouring hills of Baluchistan, Marshall does give the impression that all the terracotta female figurines may not represent one and the same divinity but, by and large, he found it convenient to think in terms of a cult of the Great Mother Goddess;[160] and it is mainly in this form that his hypothesis has gained currency. As he reconstructed it, therefore, the supposed cult already anticipates in great measure the cult of the Supreme Goddess of Purāṇic Hinduism. Marshall took his hypothesis a step further by imagining that the essential idea of Śakti-ism of later times might also be anticipated at that early age.[161] He defined Sakti-ism as essentially a sexual dualism in which the Great Mother is conceived of as the personification of the female energy (*Śakti*) and as the eternally productive principle (*Prakṛti*) which, united with the eternal male principle (*Puruṣa*), becomes the creator and mother of the universe, and he pointed out that this Great Goddess is mythologically conceived of as the consort of Śiva. He argued that a male god analogous to Śiva Paśupati of later Hinduism seemed to be depicted in some seals and sculptures,[162] and this suggested that here we might have a parallelism with the religious ideas of the ancient Near East, in which the Mother Goddess was generally associated with a young, subordinate male god. Moreover the Indus Valley and other contemporary sites in the Baluchistan hills have also yielded phallic objects and symbols of female sexual organs,[163] which suggested that already at that early age India was familiar with the religious symbolism of the organs of generation and thus with the sexual dualism which is the underlying principle of the classic Śakti-ism. In this case also, Marshall derived support from the strong probability that the Vedic Aryans disapproved of phallic worship.[164] With the exception of a few dissentient opinions,[165] these additional suggestions of Marshall have many supporters. His hypothesis of the prototype of Śiva Paśupati in the seal representations and statuary of the Indus Valley sites has proved particularly attractive.[166] It is also generally conceded that the conical symbols to which Marshall pointed out, some of which are quite realistic, are formalized representations of the phallus,[167] although his suggestions about the stone rings being symbolical representations of the female sex are dubious.[168] The fact is that, considered individually, almost every hypothesis of Marshall has found more or less general acceptance, but the arguments for the existence of a proto-Śakti-ism and proto-Śivaism in the Indus Valley culture have been best marshalled by Marshall himself and, since his great report, few further arguments in favour of this hypothesis have been put forward.

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[159] Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 51-2.

[160] *Ibid.*, p. 50, fn. 5.

[161] *Ibid.*, pp. 57 ff.

[162] *Ibid.*, pp. 52 ff.

[163] *Ibid.*, pp. 58 ff.

[164] See Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, p. 115; Keith in Rapson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 85; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 32; Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 62 ff.; *etc.* The interpretation of the expression *Śiśna-devāḥ* in *RV*, VII. 21.5 and X. 99.3 cannot, of course, be regarded as finally settled; cf. Fiser, *Indian Erotics of the Earliest Period*, pp. 85-6. Also, it must be accepted that the Vedic myths and rituals are otherwise full of erotic and sexual allusions; see *ibid.*, pp. 43 ff., 108 ff.

[165] Cf. Sastri K.A. Nilakanta, in Bhattacharya (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, pp. 65 ff.

The discoveries of the Indus Valley culture and Marshall's reconstruction of its religious life have strongly modified the types of opinions represented by Oppert, Bhandarkar and others, and form the basis of the theories on the origin and development of the Great Goddess most widely accepted today. In other words, while the goddess allied to Rudra-Śiva is believed to be the central element in the concept of the Great Goddess, the history of both, the goddess and her consort, is now frequently traced from the Indus Valley culture.[169] An additional explanation is also often added that the Great Goddess was late in receiving recognition because of her alien, non-Vedic nature.[170]

The above explanation has much to commend it, and may in fact be largly true. But it is bassed on several pre-suppositions and does not explain some significant aspects of the problem.

Thus, even if it is accepted that the terracotta female figurines from the Indus Valley sites, which conform to a certain conventional and hieratic type or otherwise, suggest pregnancy or fertility, represent goddesses, which is very likely, it is doubtful whether they represent the same goddess in every case.[171] Again, although it is very probable that the people in the Indus Valley culture were familiar with a male god analogous to the later Rudra-Śiva, we still know nothing of his supposed relation with the goddess cults at the time. If Rudra-Śiva was already allied to the Goddess at that early period, why do we notice an ambivalence in his relationship with Ambikā in the brahmanical literature, and, what is even more important, why is it that while the recognition of Rudra-Śiva appears early in the Vedic brahmanical literature and the god steadily grows in prestige, his supposed consort takes so long to appear and obtain commensurate recognition?[172] The truth is that the material objects of the Indus Valley culture can at best provided only the most general information,[173] and presuming that the short inscriptions on the seals of this culture also contain matters of religious interest, no certain assertions can be made about concepts untill their script is satisfactorily deciphered.[174]

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[166] Wheeler, who otherwise sounds the need for caution in handling material objects for the reconstruction of religion, seems to accept fully Marshall's hypothesis of the existence of "Śiva" as *yogī*, *paśupati* and *naṭarāja* in the Indus Valley culture; see Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, pp. 89-90, 109.

[167] See *e.g.*, Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 109; Basham *The Wonder that was India*, p. 24; Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 63; *etc.*

[168] See also above, Ch. I, p. 87.

[169] See *e.g.* Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 447, 489; Yaduvanshi, *Śaiva Mata* chs. 1 and 2.

[170] Cf. Norman Brown, W., *op. cit.*, in Kramer (ed.), *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, p. 310.

[171] See our same remark above, Ch. I, p. 75, about the terracotta female figurines of the early historic period; cf. also similar comments by Nilsson on the supposed cult of the Great Mother Goddess in Minoan-Mycenaean religion; Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion, etc.*, pp. 337-8.

With literary records of the Vedic brahmanical tradition, we are naturally on firmer ground. We have shown below in another context that there are grounds to suspect that Rudra-Śiva has many and marked non-Vedic elements in his make-up.[175] It is significant, therefore, that the Great Goddess of Purāṇic times often bears the names of Śiva's consort. The earliest and the most important mention of a female deity associated with Rudra is of Ambikā, who appears in the *Vājasaneyi* and the *Taittirīya Saṁhitās* as his sister,[176] and receives her share of offerings with him in the rite called *Tryambaka-homa.*[177] It is also significant that Ambikā is pictured in *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa* and the commentaries on the Yajurvedic texts cited above as a cruel goddess and killer.[178] It is only in a later period that she appears as the wife of Rudra.[179] Umā, another favourite name of Śiva's consort in epic-Purāṇic times, appears for the first time as Umā Haimavatī in *Kenar Talavakāra Upaniṣad*, without, however, any connection with Rudra-Śiva but important enough to be imagined as the being who revealed the identity of the resplendent Brahman to the Vedic gods Indra, Agni and Vāyu.[180] The epithet Haimavatī may point to the mountainous origin of Umā, but, if she was already allied to Śiva, the epithet might have come to her also through the association of that god with mountains.[181] The commentary on the Upaniṣadic passage naturally identifies the goddess as *Brahma-vidyā* and also understands Haimavatī as alternatively indicating 'one resplendent with golden ornaments' or the daughter of Himālaya.[182] Already in the later Vedic period, various froms of Rudra had been imagined.[183] In the *Gṛhya-sūtras*, in the description of the *Śūla-gava* sacrifice which is especially meant for him, he is associated with several female beings who bear names such as Rudrāṇī, Bhavānī, Śarvāṇī, Īśānī, *etc*., and who receive their share of offerings.[184] By the time of the epics, Rudra has become a very prominent god and his consort is frequently mentioned with him. She appears under various names, Umā being probably the favourite one. Several of her names are derived from the myth of her being the daughter of Himavat, such as Pārvatī, which appears only in late passages but is very common in the *Harivaṁśa* and the *Purāṇas*, and others like Giri-putrī, *etc*. Besides the stories of her birth and marriage, she also appears conspicuously in the myth of the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice by Śiva.[185] It is this last myth which later grew into the elaborate Pīṭha legends explaining the many forms and various sacred seats of the Great Goddess.[186]

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[172] See below.

[173] Cf. Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 108; Gordon, *The Prehistoric Background of Indian Culture*, p. 68; Allchin, Bridget and Raymond, *The Birth of Indian Civilization*, p. 308; also Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, pp. 19 ff.

[174] The recent claim by Finnish scholars, Parpola and others, to have deciphered the Indus Valley script has not yet received general approval; see reviews of their first two pamphlets, embodying preliminary reports on the decipherment by Zide, Arlene R.K. and Zvelebil, Kamil, in *Indo-Iranian Journal*, XII, no. 2, 1970, pp. 126 ff. Similarly, the still recent attempt by S.R. Rao to read Vedic Sanskrit in the Indus Valley seal inscriptions awaits general acceptance; see Rao, *The Decipherment of the Indus Script*; also Mahadevan, Iravathan "Recent Advances in the study of the Indus Script", *Puratattva*, no. 9, 1977-78, pp. 34-42.

[175] Sea below, Ch. III, p. 206, fn. 280.

[176] *VS.*, III. 57a; *TS.*, I.8.6.

[177] The rite of *Tryāmbaka-homa* and the place of Ambikā in it is discussed below in another context, where the relevant passages from the Vedic texts are also reproduced; see below, Ch. III, pp. 212 ff..

[178] See below, Ch. III, pp. 214.

[179] See Muir, *OST*, IV, pp. 420, 422; also *TA*, X. 22 Hopkins, *EM*, p. 226. On the lateness of the Xth chapter of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, see below.

[180] *Kena Upaniṣad*, III. I—IV. 1.

[181] See Weber as cited in Muir, *OST*, IV, pp. 423—4; also Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 199-200. Bhandarkar believed that Umā was already regarded as the wife of Rudra-Śiva; see Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, p. 111. It is not however, till the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, X. 22 (see below) and the epics (see Hopkins, *EM*, p. 224) that Śiva is called the husband of Umā.

In the evolution of the concept of the Great Goddess, a reference is invariably made also to a version of the Vedic *gāyatrī* found in the tenth chapter of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*. This *gāyatrī* reads: *Kātyāyanāya vidmahe kanyakumāri* (*sic*) *dhīmahi, tanno durgiḥ pracodayāt*; (literally, "we think on Kātyāyana and meditate Kanyakumāri; may Durgi advance us").[187] Since other deities for whom also appropriate *gāyatrīs* are given in the same context are all male,[188] it seems natural that in this *gāyatrī* also we obtain masculine forms Kātyāyana, Kanyakumāri and Durgi. But the formula is a curious one and, as Weber pointed out, there is no alternative except to accept the traditional explanation of the commentators and understand the names as irregular forms referring to the Great Goddess as Kātyāyanī, Kanyākumārī and Durgā.[189] The forms are more or less regularized in the *Nārāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* (which is only another name of the tenth chapter of the *Taittirīya Āyaṇyaka*) in the Atharva-vedic tradition and the *Liṅga Purāṇa*.[190] This part of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* contains interesting references to the Goddess in two other places also. One is a verse invoking Durgā who is called there *Agni-varṇā*. and *Vairocanī*.[191] This verse occurs also in the later additions to the *Rātri-sūkta* in the *Khila* of the *Ṛg-veda*.[192] In the other, Rudra-Śiva is invoked as Ambikāpati and Umā-pati.[193] This last part of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* is generally accepted as a very late addition.[194] In fact, it is extremely doubtful if it can be dated before the Christian era. The same may be said of the *Rātri-sūkta* in the *Khila* of the *Ṛg-veda* which eulogizes Durgā in some verses apparently added to it in much later times.[195]

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[182] See the commentary on the relevant lines of the *Kena Upaniṣad*, reproduced by Weber, as cited in Muir, *OST*, IV, p. 421, fn. 200.

[183] See Bhandarkar, op. cit., pp. 103-5.

[184] See *HGS*, II. 8.7, (*SBE* XXX, pp. 221-2); *Pār. GS*., III. 8.10, (*SBE*, XXIX, p. 352); see also Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 106.

[185] See Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 224 ff.; Mahadevan, in Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 457; also Yaduvanshi, *Śaiva Mata*, pp. 58 ff., 69-70, 78 ff., 81 ff. .

[186] See above, Ch. I, for pīṭha legends.

[187] See Muir, *OST*, IV, p. 426; *IA*, X. 1.

[188] These are Rudra, Vakratuṇḍa Danti (Gaṇeśa), Nandi, Mahāsena Ṣaṇmukha (Skanda-Kārttikeya), Garuḍa, Brahma (Brahmā) Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, Āditya (Sun) and Agni.

[189] See Weber, as cited in Muir, *OSW*, IV, pp. 426 -7.

[190] *Ibid*., p. 426, fn. 211; also Oppert, *The Original Inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa*, p. 308, fn. 105.

[191] Muir, *OST*, IV, p. 427; *TA*, X. 2.

[192] *RV. Khila*, IV. 2. 12 (see Scheftelowitz, *Die Apocryphen des Ṛgveda*, pp. 111-2; *RV*, ed. Sontakke and Kashikar, vol. IV, p. 957).

The above survey demonstrates one thing very clearly. While Rudra himself had many non-Vedic elements in his make-up, he also seems to have gathered around himself several popular goddesses of non-Vedic origin who bore names which were later given to the Great Goddess and some of whom, such as Ambikā, had clear malevolent streaks in their character. It is possible to imagine, therefore, that the goddess originally and most closely allied to Rudra-Śiva gradually rose to importance and absorbed other popular goddesses of similar nature and origin. But this hypothesis still does not quite explain the fact that while Rudra is an important god already in later Vedic texts and, presuming that the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* was composed before the Christian era and probably not much earlier than the *Bhagavadgitā*, he had become important enough to be identified with Brahman,[196] his consort takes longer to make an appearance and obtain full recognition. If the apocryphal *stutis* are excluded from consideration, as they should be, even in the *Mahābhārata*, Umā-Pārvatī derives her prominence mainly from being the consort of Śiva and does not appear to be a popular goddess worshipped in her own right. It appears to us, therefore, that the Great Goddess of Purāṇic times must have a history slightly different from that of Rudra-Śiva, and that perhaps she was the product of certain special historical situations. The simple explanation that the nucleus of the Great Goddess was provided by the consort of Rudra-Śiva may not be sufficient.

We have seen in the preceding chapter that there is a great probability of the prevalence of goddess cults in the Indus Valley culture. It may also be that these cults survived in later Indian history and provided the background for the growth of the cult of the Great Goddess. The terracotta female figurines and the carved stone rings or discs of the early historic period also provide a certain continuity, however vague.[197] Literature also, as seen in the previous chapter, supplies evidence of widespread cults of popular goddesses of various types and thus helps fill in the background.

Reliable sculptural evidence, which anticipates to a considerable extent the cult of the Great Goddess as seen for example in the *Devī-māhātmya*, starts with the beginning of the Christian era. It has been noted above that the killing of the Buffalo-demon appears to be the most important myth connected with the Great Goddess. It is also

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193. *TA*, X. 22.
194. See Max Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, etc.*, p. 334; Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, I, pt. I, pp. 205, 207; Ghosh, B.K., in Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age*, p, 421.
195. *RV. Khila*, IV. 2, esp. vv. 5 ff. (see Scheftelowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-2; *RV*, ed. Sontakke and Kashikar, Vol, IV pp. 956-9 also *ibid.*, p. 907) Gāyatri mantras of several Purāṇic deities, including Gaurī are found in some late verses connected with the Śatarudrīya section of the Maitrāyaṇīya Saṁhitā of the Black Yajur veda. But this section of the Saṁhitā is even later than the tenth book of the Taittirīya Āranyaka; see Banerjea Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion, p. 116.
196. See Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 143, 144; Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, p. 103 ff.
197. See above, Ch. I, pp. 72 ff., 86 ff.

probably the favourite iconographic motif of the Goddess and is widely distributed in time and space.[198] The Mahiṣamardinī motif has its own history of evolution in art, from simple early compositions depicting the bare essentials of the myth in the form of the Goddess overpowering a buffalo to more complex and artistically more satisfying later ones of various types, in which the Goddess and her demon adversary take different iconographic forms.[199] Some developed forms of the motif provide close parallels with the Purāṇic myth in which the demon is portrayed as emerging in human form when his buffalo-head had been decapitated.[200] The earliest specimens of the Mahiṣamardinī motif come from Mathura and are dated in the Kuṣāṇa period. It is significant that they do not show the lion mount of the Goddess.[201] Two terracotta plaques, from Nagar, in the Jaipur unit of Rajasthan, depicting the same theme have also been assigned to a period from the mid-1st century B.C. to the early 1st century A.D.,[202] but the presence of the lion in the better preserved of the two has been regarded as incongruous for such an early figure.[203] They probably belong to late Kuṣāṇa or early Gupta period.[204] The motif must have become quite popular by the Gupta period because specimens of it in stone and terracotta are reported from Bhīṭā, Ahicchatrā, Rajghat (all in Uttar Pradesh), Udaigiri Caves, the Śiva temple at Bhumra, and Karavan (all in Madhya Pradesh).[205]

None of the early Mahiṣamardinī figures dated to the Kuṣāṇa period bears an identifying label or dedicatory inscription. In the circumstances, while there is no question of their identification as Mahiṣamardinī, which happens to be an excellent descriptive term, there is no means of knowing that the goddess represented by them was already imagined as the Great Goddess. It has been remarked by one scholar that the Kuṣāṇ statuettes depict an earlier version of the myth which has an unmistakably rural atmosphere.[206] However, these early figures prove the very popular cult of a goddess who, inasmuch as she was regarded as the killer of the Buffalo-demon, strongly anticipates the Great Goddess of the *Devī-māhātmya.* It may be that this goddess, whatever her real name and earlier history, served as the nucleus of the growth of Great Goddess. Since Mathura was a prolific centre of art during the period, it is not unnatural that the majority of the early figures, if not all of them, belong to that place. But it would be safer to infer that this goddess had a popular cult in a much wider area, embracing southern and south-western Uttar Pradesh and the contiguous regions of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. We are, therefore, strongly inclined to believe that she is the same goddess who appears in the persistent tradition of Vindhyavāsinī Devī in literature. Perhaps it was she who was originally given the name Durgā, and was mostly worshipped by non-Aryan tribes like the Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas.[207]

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[198] Cf. Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 497, 499-500; Viennot, Odette, "The Goddess Mahiṣamardinī in Kuṣāṇa Art", *Art. As.*, XIX, 1956, p. 368.

[199] For the Mahiṣamardinī figures in early Indian art in general, see Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 497 ff.; Agrawala, R.C., "The Goddess Mahiṣāsuramardinī in Early Indian Art", *Art. As.*, XXI, 1958, pp. 123 ff.; Seshadri, M., "Mahiṣāsuramardinī", *The Half-yearly Journal of the Mysore University*, sec. A—Arts, XXII, no. 2, 1963, pp. 1 ff. A very full survey is available in Mitterwallner, Gritli Von, "The Kuṣāṇa Type of the Goddess Mahiṣamardinī as compared to the Gupta and Mediaeval Types", in *German Scholars on India*, Vol. II, pp. 196—213, where some further researches of Viennot and others by J.C. Harle are also noticed.

[200] See Agrawala, V.S., "The Devī-māhātmya", *JIH*, XLII, 1964, pp. 827—8.

[201] See Agrawala, *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art*,p. 57; also Viennot and Agrawala, R.C., *op. cit.*

[202] See Agrawala, R.C., "Terracotta Plaque of Mahiṣamardinī from Nagar", *Lalit Kalā*, 1-2, 1955-56 pp. 72 ff., and by the same author, *op. cit.*, *Art, As.* XXI, pp. 123 ff. .

[203] See Seshadri, *op. cit.*, p. 6; also Iyer, K. Bharatha, "An Early Gupta Seal of the Mahiṣāsuramardinī", *Art. As.*, XXXI, 1969, p. 180, fn. 8.

[204] See Viennot, *op. cit.*, (fn. 208 above), *Art. As.*, XIX, 1956, p. 372.

[205] See Seshadri, *op. cit.*, (pp. 6-8; Iyer, *op. cit.*, *Art. As.*, XXXI, pp. 179 ff.)

[206] See Iyer, *op. cit.*, *Art As.*, XXXI, p. 180.

The strong Śivaite element in the concept of the Great Goddess[208] indicates that this very popular divinity of the Vindhya region, who was regarded as the killer of the Buffalow-demon, was absorbed in the Śivaite circles before the philosophic and literary forms of the concept appeared, as in the *Devī-māhātmya.* It is also highly probable that she was already allied to Śiva when her earliest figures appear in Mathur art, and that her concept and cult obtained a classifical form in association with the cult of Śiva. The history of Śivaism during the period seems to confirm this influence. There are several indications that the Śiva cult was particularly popular in western India including Mathura an Ujjayinī, in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Śaka and Kuṣāṇ kings of Mathura, who ruled from the 1st century B.C. to 3rd century A.D., favoured either Śiva or Buddha.[209] The Nāga-Bhāraśivas and Yaudheyas, probably the two most important native dynasties which asserted themselves after the disruption of the Kuṣāṇa empire, were ardent devotees of Śiva or of the Śivaite deity Skanda-Kārttikeya.[210] The Mathura Pillar Inscription, dated in the Gupta year 61 (=380-1 A.D.) proves that a branch of Pāśupata Śivaism flourished at Mathura during the Kuṣāṇa and early Gupta periods.[211] The best evidence of the popularity of the Śiva cult in the Avanti region is the strong tradition of the renowned shrine of Mahākāla-Śiva at Ujjayinī.[212] It may also be added that some Parivrājaka Mahārājas, who were feudatories of the Imperial Guptas in Madhya Pradesh, Yaśodharman, Mihirakula, and most of the kings of the Vākāṭakas and Valabhī dynasties were worshippers of Śiva.[213]

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[207] See also obove, p. 103. There is a famous modern temple of the Vindhyavāsinī devī at Vindhyachal on the south bank of the Ganges in the Mirzapur distnict of U.P.; we do not know of any other temple which stakes its claim for that distinction.

[208] See above, pp. 100-1, 116 ff.

[209] See Raychaudhuri, *Materials for the Study of the Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Sect*, p. 164.

[210] Sircar, D.C., in Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 166-7, 169

[211] Bhandarkar, D.R., "Mathura Pillar Inscription of Chandragupta II: G.E. 61", *EI*, XXI, pp. 1 ff. .

[212] See *Meghadūta*, I. 34; *Raghuvaṁśa*, VI. 34; also above, p. 112, fn. 133. The very coarse query in the *Mṛcchakaṭika*, when Viduṣaka referring to the obesity of Vasantasenā's mother, asks whether the entrance of the house was constructed after she was set up there like an idol of Śiva, is understood by van Buitenen to have an indirect reference to the famous Mahākāla temple at Ujjayinī; see *Mṛcchakaṭika*, Act IV, NSP. edn., p. 124; *Ibid.*, tr. van Buitenen, Intro., p. 285, note 39. See also *Mār. P.*, tr. Pargiter, pp. xi, 521 and note.

The above discussion indicates that the popular "Buffalo-killing" goddess of the early statuettes from Mathura, who may have been the original Vindhyavāsinī Devī worshipped by non-Aryan tribes, served as the nucleus of the development of the Great Goddess of the *Devī-māhātmya* and similar texts. Also, this concept gradually evolved during the Kuṣāṇa and early Gupta periods somewhere in the general region of western India, in alliance with the cult of Śiva, which had a stronghold in that region.[224] It is in this specialized form that we may speak of the consort of Rudra-Śiva as forming the nucleus of the concept of the Great Goddess.

Perhaps the special historical and cultural background of the age also aided the process of this evolution. It has been seen in the previous Chapter that, during the rule of the foreign dynasties, alien goddesses were introduced in the country.[225] It was also noted that Prākrit forms of the names of some foreign deities have been suspected in the *Aṅgavijjā*, and the Indian terracotta materials of the early historic period also show some influence of alien goddess cults and concepts.[216] It is not possible to assess accurately the nature and extent of the contribution made by this phenomenon to the eventual growth of the cult of the Great Goddess. Nevertheless, this necessitates that, as against vague suggestions often made about parallelism or contacts between the Indian cult of the Great Goddess and West Asiatic Mother Goddess cults in very early times,[217] enquiry should be directed specifically towards relatively more recent, historical times, such as during the Achaemenid, Alexandrian, Scythian, Parthian and Kuṣāṇa periods, when India was known to have been in closer contacts with countries beyond its western border and was very likely to have received external influences and made its influence felt on the neighbouring cultures.

The periods of most immediate relevance to our enquiry are those of the rule of the Kuṣāṇas and the immediately succeeding one when the native dynasties asserted their independence, culminating in the rise of the Imperial Guptas, who brought most of North India under one rule. It is well known that the Kuṣāṇa coin-series reveals an elaborate and complex pantheon of deities drawn from the Greco-Roman world, Hellenised West Asia, Iran and India. This pantheon also includes several goddesses, of

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213. See Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 95. 102, 107 111; also *ibid.*, p. 146 and by the same author, "Mandasor Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman", *IA*, July 1889, pp. 219-20; Majumdar, in Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 37; Mirashi, *Vākāṭaka Rājavaṁśa kā Itihāsa tathā Abhilekha*, p. 72; Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, p. 203.
214. See also Pargiter, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
215. See above, Ch. I, p. 69.
216. See above, Ch. I, pp. 78 ff..
217. There are several attempts of this type, but it is most marked in Dikshit, *The Mother Goddess*, where speculative theories are frequently built up on the basis of vague linguistic and other parallelisms. See also Przyluski, Jean, "Les Aśvin et la Grade Déesse", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, I, 1936 pp. 129 ff. and "The Great Goddess in India and Iran", *IHQ*, X, no. 3, 1934, pp. 405 ff., and criticism of the two by Keith, A.B., in "The Aśvins and the Great Goddess", *IC*, III, 1937, pp. 721 ff.; also Raychaudhuri, H.C., "Proto Types (?) of Śiva in Western Asia", in law (ed.), *D.R. Bhandarkar Volume*, pp. 301 ff.; Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, II, p 23; *etc.*

whom the most important are Nana and Ardokhsho who, in terms of the number of coins and variety of types, take precedence over several gods.[218] Whatever, may be the true explanation of the adoption of such a mixed pantheon by the Kuṣāṇa kings,[219] the fact that they assigned prominent positions to certain alien goddesses must have made its impact on the local goddess cults and indirectly on the evolution of the cult of the Great Goddess. Since the early history and true character of both Nana and Ardokhsho are obscure,[220] it has been possible to speak so far in terms of iconographic influences only. The influence of the Ardokhsho type on the Śrī-Lakṣmī of the gold coin-series of the Imperial Guptas has been noted above.[221] Whether the lion-mount of Umā-Pārvatī was introduced under the influence of Nana is uncertain. But such a possibility cannot be ruled out, especially in view of the probable identification of the two deities. The characteristic lion mount of the Indian goddess could have come through her consort Rudra-Śiva, who is depicted in the *Mahābhārata* as driving in a chariot drawn by lions.[222] But there is no authority to our knowledge which may be certainly dated before the Kuṣāṇa period and which associates Umā-Pārvati-Ambikā-Durgā with a lion.[223] It is also significant that this mount makes a late appearance in the Mahiṣamardinī reliefs and many figures of Durgā-Pārvatī, from Mathura and belonging to the Kuṣāṇa period, are so identified mainly on the basis of the presence of a lion in the composition.[224] The real impact of Nana and Ardokhsho, whose characters sometimes

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218. Rosenfield *The Dyanastic Arts of the Kushanas*, pp. 69, 72, 74-5, 83 ff.; also above, Ch. I, p. 69 and fn. 361.
219. See Rosenfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 69 ff.
220. Nana has been related to Innana-Ishtar of the ancient Near East, and Ardokhsho to the equivallent of Old Persian Rti (s) vahvī, the Avestic A (r) si-Oakhsho (of *Aśi Yaśt* Yaśt XVII). But the two goddesse have also been related to Anāhitā (of Avestan *Āban Yaśt*), who may contain religious elements of great antiquity but who makes a late appearence and is known to have had a popular cult in Iran in the Parthian period. The latter suggestion gains some strength also on the consideration that but for it, is difficult to account for the absence of Anāhitā on the Kuṣāṇa coins; see Rosenfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-5 and 83 ff.; also Ghirshman, *Iran* pp. 269-70. For brief sketches of the concepts and cults of Innana-Ishtar and Anāhitā, see Paton, Lewis Bayles, "Ishtar", *ERE*, 7, pp. 428 ff.; Cumont, Fr., "Anāhita", *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 414.5. On Nana, see also Azarpay, G., "Nanā, the sumero-Akkadian Goddess of Transoxiana", *JAOS*, 96.4 (1976), pp. 536-42. It has been pointed out by Agrawala that the name Nanā occurs in the list of the Nighaṇṭu and it is used in *RV*, IX. 112.3 in the sense of mother. He also thought that this word may be connected with the ancient Sumerian goddess variously called Nana, Innana, *etc.*, and with Nana of the Kuṣāṇa coins. But as he himself has pointed out, the name is a rarity in Vedic literature. Whatever may, be the origin of this word in Vedic literature, it is extremely doubtful that it has any connection with goddess Nana of the Kuṣāṇa coins; see Agrawala, Vasudeva S., "Aditi and the Great Goddess", *IC* IV, no. 4,1938, p. 409.
221. See above, Ch. I, pp. 66-7.
222. See *Mbh.*, III. 221. 1-2.
223. The Mohenjodaro seal which is supposed to represent proto-Śiva also shows a tiger among the animals surrounding the seated human figure, but this hardly provides evidence of the association of the mother goddesses in that culture with a sacred tiger; see Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, p. 52. For the possibility of the lion-mount of Durgā-Ambikā being Dravidian in origin, see Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, p. 88.
224. See above, Ch. I, p. 70.

appear mixed with each other,[225] probably lies in another direction. It is quite probable that their high status and popularity with the ruling dynasty gave a certain prestige to the local goddess cults. The most important individual gainer was the consort of Śiva. Since Śiva appears on the Kuṣāṇa coins both with Nana and with Umā, the Kuṣāṇas must have identified the two goddesses and assigned them the same high status.[226]

Considering the strong probability that the Mahiṣamardinī goddess, affiliated to Śiva and identified with Umā-Pārvati-Ambikā *etc.*, enjoyed great popularity at Mathura and the contiguous southern and south-western regions during the Kuṣāṇa period, it is quite likely that she acquired even greater importance when the local dynasties asserted their independence after the disruption of the Kuṣāṇa empire. The catholic spirit of the Guptas, their feudo-federal administrative set-up and the overall cultural florescence during the period of their rule[227] must have provided the opportunity for a further development and wider acceptance of her cult, its full recognition in elite brahmanical circles and the consequent evolution of the literary and philosophical form of the Great Goddess. The association with the cult of Viṣṇu should be regarded as roughly coinciding with these final phases of the development. If Jaiswal's suggestion is accepted that Ekānaṁśā was originally a tutelary goddess of the Vṛṣṇi tribe,[228] this association may have been first initiated with the identification of Ekānaṁśa with Vindhyavāsinī, but it achieved a more definite form with the evolution of the Viṣṇuite sectarian theology and the recognition of the Great Goddess as the Mahā-māyā or Yoga-nidrā of Viṣṇu.

The characteristic brahmanical elements in the concept of the Great Goddess belong, as suggested above, to the latest stage in its development. The Vedic elements entered the cult apparently through the recognition of the Goddess and the development of the literary form and philosophical basis of her cult in the brahmanicalt radition.[229] The contribution of individual Vedic deities, such as Aditi, Pṛthivi, Sarasvati, *etc.*, appears to us to be very limited. While Sarasvati had her own independent cult[230] and, at best, only added to the richness of the literary picture of the Goddess by lending her name, Aditi and Pṛthivi could scarcely be said to have had popular cults in the real sense of the term.[231] The more difinite Vedic brahmanical contribution is the ideological one. As Wilson pointed out very early, the monistic strands in the Vedic hymns do anticipate of the concept of the Goddess in the *Devī-māhātmya.*[232] It is in this sense that the concept of Aditi as the mother of gods and of all beings, or that of Pṛthivī as the Great Mother, *etc.*, could have made their contributions.[233] More definite anticipations of the Primeval Female Principle as the source of all creation are available in the *Devī.*[234] and *Rātri-sūktas*[235] of the *Ṛg-veda.* In the former, the goddess Vāc appears in the role of the Ultimate Creative Principle; in the latter, Rātri. Both appear to have no basis in popular cults. They are rather pure products of priestly imagination.[236] But both ideological traditions apparently survived in later thought. It is likely that the concept of the Great Goddess as Supreme Knowledge, *Mahā-vidyā,*[237] is related not so much with the concept of Sarasvati of the popular cult, but rather with this ancient concept of Vāc, most probably through the mediacy of Brahman-knowledge, *Brahma-vidyā.* Similarly, it is impossible not to detect a certain relationship between Vedic Rātri and the concept of the Great Goddess as Rātri, Nidrā, *etc.*.[238] In any case, as has been pointed out, both the above-mentioned *sūktas* of the *Ṛg-veda* came to occupy a prominent position in the Śākta ritual of later times.[239] The suggestive ideas in these and other Ṛg-vedic *sūktas,* such as the *Puruṣa-sūkta*[240] and the *Nāsdīyda-sūkta,*[241] were loosely organised in the *Upaniṣads* in the concept of an impersonal Brahman as the source and end of all creation[242] As in other sectarian theistic system, especially as they are seen in the popular

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[225] See Rosenfield, *op cit.*, p. 88.

[226] See *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 94; Cf. also Mukherjee, *Nanā on Lion—A study in Kuṣāṇa Numismatic Art*, pp. 18 ff., and 57 ff., and review of this work by A.D.H. Bivar, in *BSOAS*, XXXIV, 1971, pp. 615b-616 b.

[227] See Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, pp. xlvi ff.; 348 ff.; 373.

[228] See above, p. 104.

[229] Coburn's researches (*op. cit.*,) are particularly referred. By an intensive investigation of all significant names, epithets concept and myths in the *Devī-māhātmya*, he has made an excellent study of the earlier Sanskritic sources of the text.

[230] On the goddess Sarasvatī. see above, Ch. I, p. 39, fn. 186.

[231] See below, for suggestions about the possible nature of their contribution. It may be noted that the Mahāyāna Buddhist text *Suvarṇa-prabhāsottama-sūtra* devotes a whole chapter to the goddess Dṛḍhā Pṛthivī, but her conception there is quite abstract and not that of a popular goddess in active worship; see *Suvarṇa-prabhāsottama-sūtra*, ed. Nobel, ch. 10, pp. 121 ff.; *Ibid.*, tr. Emmerick, pp. 51 ff.; Cf. also Tucci, Giuseppe, "Earth in India and Tibet", *EJ*, XXII, 1953 (1959), p. 325.

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232. See above, p. 116.
233. On the concepts of Aditi and Pṛthivī in the Vedic religion, see Macdonell, *VM*, pp. 88, 120 ff.; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 174, 215 ff.; also Agrawala, Vasudeva S., "Aditi and the Great Goddess", *IC*, IV, no. 4, 1938, pp. 401 ff. The Vedic brahmanical goddess Pṛthivī seems to have had a closer relationship with Śrī-Lakṣmī; see Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, pp. 230-1; also Tucci, *op. cit.*, *EJ*, XXII, p. 347.
234. *ṚV*, X. 125. See also Norman Brown, W., "The Creative Role of the Goddess Vāc in the Ṛig Veda", in Heesterman (ed.), *Pratidānam*, pp. 393 ff. He suggests that *Ekaṁ sat* of *RV*, I. 164.46 also refers to Vāc,
235. *RV.*, X. 127.
236. Cf. Norman Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 393. In the *Bṛhaddevatā*, Vāc is considered threefold, terrestrial, middle and celestial, and other goddesses are imagined as her forms; see *Bṛhaddevatā*, II. 72 ff. The additional first line in the v. 77, which refers to Durgā, is considered an interpolation; see *Ibid.*, tr. Macdonell, note on II. 77. On the goddess Vāc, see also Misra, Vidya Niwas, "Vāk Legends in the Brāhmaṇa Literature" in Saksena, Baburam, et al (eds.), *Kaviraja Abhinandana Grantha*, pp. 20-28.
237. See above, p. 95.
238. Cf. *Mār.P.*, 78.59 (tr. Pargiter, p. 471), which occures in Brahmā's eulogy to the Goddess:
    Kālarātrir-mahārātrir-moharātriśca dāruṇā.
    Also, *Māt. P.*, 154. 56 ff.; see also above, pp. 91, 94.
239. See Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 490-1. According to *Mārica-kalpa*, a Tantric text, in the ritual recitation of *Devi-māhātmya*, the *Ratri-sūkta* should be recited in the beginning and the *Devī sūkta* at the end; see *Durgā-Saptaśatī* VSP edn. Intro., pp. 5-6; *Ibid.*, Gita Press edn., p. 40.
240. *RV*, X. 90.
241. *RV*, X. 129.
242. For a brief sketch of the Upaniṣadic concept of Brahman and its relation with the monistic thought in the Ṛg-vedic hymns, see Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 41 ff., 53 ff. .

Purāṇic literature, the concept of the Great Goddess in the *Devi-māhātmya* and similar texts also utilizes this idea for its own purposes.[243] Again, as Wilson pointed out, another important source of the philosophic basis of the Goddess should be the concept of Prakṛti in Sāṁkhya philosophy.[244] A marked dualism is not a conspicuous feature of the concept of the Great Goddess as seen in the *Devī-māhātmya* or similar materials examined above, but the text is apparently borrowing Sāṁkhya terminology in calling the Goddess Prakṛti or Mula-prakṛti.[245] In any case,as affiliated to Śivaism, or in the from of the consort of Śiva, which is particulary noticeable in the *Tantras*, a monistic adaptation of Sāmkhya principles is obvious in the concept of the Goddess.[246]

We may summaries the above discussions in the form that while a long continuity of analogous cults and concepts, with their histories going back to the Indus Valley and the Vedic culture, formed the background or the substratum, the immediate elements that led to the formation of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess were of independent later growth, or at least became recognizeable in literature and art at a much later period. Also, in all probability, these elements were of non-Vedic and non-Aryan origin and became particulary prominent in the western and south-western part of India during the rule of the Kuṣāṇas and in the immediately following period when native dynasties became locally autonomous. Allied to the cult of Śiva, these elements became prominent enough to give rise to the concept and cult of the Supreme Goddess by the Gupta period. It was probably only after the cult had achieved a certain prominence and a loose organisation that it was affiliated also to the cult of Viṣṇu. As a direct result of the evolution of the Supreme Goddess, the idea became popular that each god has his Śakti; the gods in themselves are powerless and their energies are centred in their female counterparts. It is not surprising that the same *Devī-māhātmya*, which presents the allegory of Caṇḍikā-Ambikā formed of the collective energies of the gods and ready to annihilate the demons, also contains the allegorical description of the Mātṛs as personified energies of various gods.

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243. Cf. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, III, p. 497.
244. Wilson, *The Religious Sects of the Hindus*, pp. 136-7; also Renou in Renou and Ftlliozat, *L'Inde Classique*, I, pp. 519-20.
245. See *Mār. P.*, 78.59; 81.7; 82.7; *etc*, (tr. Pargiter, pp. 471, 483, 489, *etc.*).
246. Cf. Woodroffe, *Introduction to Tantra Śāstra*, pp. 4 ff.

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The Mātṛs, especially in the form of the Sapta-mātṛs, are familiar figures to students of Indian iconography. They are equally familiar figures in classical Sanskrit literature, even though they are normally referred to by their generic name alone rather than as a specific group of seven or eight, as in the iconographic texts. It is certain, therefore, that the Mātṛs had an important popular cult in ancient India, maintaining its distinct individuality despite the growing cult of Devī which absorbed many other goddesses and often altered them beyond recognition. Still, the history of these divinities is very obscure, and we are immediately on uncertain ground when faced with questions like what and how many goddesses constituted this group, how they were named, what was their original and essential nature and in what manner they were propitiated.

PREVALENCE OF THE CULT OF MĀTṚS

A review of some opinions about the origin and early history of the Mātṛs will be presented below—opinions which trace the cult back to the Indus Valley or the Vedic Culture, or sometimes to the two together, besides those pointing to the essentially non-Aryan character of these goddesses. But whatever, the origin and early history of the Mātṛs, the prevalence of their cult from about the beginning of the Christian era can be safely inferred from the available literary and archaeological evidence.

To concentrate on the literary evidence first, the confused mythology of the birth of Skanda and his anointment as the generalissimo of the army of the gods *etc.*, as available in the *Āraṇyaka-*[1] and the *Śalya-parvans*[2] of the *Mahābhārata*, contains several important allusions to the Mātṛs. Cited generally as *Mātaraḥ* or *Mātṛgaṇāḥ*, they appear there in groups, sometimes specified and named but also anonymously, sometimes in the company of Śiva, but frequently as the mothers of Skanda. We propose to analyse these passages later, with a view to ascertaining the origin and nature of the Mātṛs, but it may be mentioned here that the texts not only utilize these goddesses to build up the myth of Skanda's birth, they also contain clear evidence of their cult. Thus, in the *Araṇyaka-parvan*, one group of such goddesses, called the daughters of Hutāśana and apparently distinguished from another group of Mothers, are said to have requested

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1. Chs. 213-21.
2. Chs. 43-5.

Skanda to bless them to become the good and respected "Mothers of the World,"[3] to which the young god replied: "Be it so". A little later, without specifying what Mothers or what group of Mothers are meant, we are told that all the Mothers requested Skanda to instal them in place of another anonymous group of *Mātṛs* of a bygone age so that they might now be worshipped. Skanda granted the request, conferred upon the Mothers great power and assured them: "Ye shall live happily worshipped by all."[4] The *Mātṛgaṇāḥ*, in this context, appear as afflicters of children and are supposed to be pacified with ablutions, incense, unguents, *bali-karma* and other offerings, and especially with the worship of Skanda; when honoured and worshipped thus, they are said to bestow upon men what is good for them, as well as valour and long life.[5] It may be added here that the *Mahābhārata* also mentions a *Mātṛ-tīrtha*[6] and once calls Śiva by the name *Mātṛ-bhakta*,[7] *i.e.*, one devoted to the Mātṛs.

There are many references to the *Mātṛs* in the early Purānic literature,[8] and the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* as well as later *Śilpaśāstras* contain prescriptions for making Mātṛ-icons.[9] Particularly suggestive of the popularity of the Mātṛ-cult is the succint verse of the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* which, in trying to lay down what persons are especially qualified to perform the worship of what deities, names only the devotees of viṣnu, Sūrya, Śiva, the Mātṛs, Brahmā, Buddha and Jina.[10] The *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata also recommends the worship of the Mātṛs in the ritual connected with the preparation and consecration of the playhouse and the stage. The text clearly identifies these goddesses as "Brāhmī, *etc.*, but prefers to label them *Nāṭya-mātṛa.*[11] But perhaps even more reliable evidences of the prevalence of the Mātṛ-cult are the incidental references in the "belles-lettres" of the classical Sanskrit literature. In the drama (*Daridra-*) *Cārudatta*, ascribed to Bhāsa, the hero Cārudatta instructs his Vidūṣaka friend: "Go, offer (this) *bali* to the Mātṛs at the crossroads,"[12] and the instruction, in almost the same words, is repeated in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* of Śūdraka.[13] Obviously it must have been possible to make such offerings by proxy. What is significant here is that, in the latter drama, when the Vidūṣaka shows reluctance to oblige, because, in his opinion, there was no use in such offerings when the deities did not favour poor Cārudatta, the hero's stern reply is that such rites should not be questioned; they are the obligatory duties of a householder.[14] Clearly, the particular offering to the Mātṛs is assumed here to be a commonplace one,[15] and at least in this case, the main worshipper happens to be a poor brāhmana in the merchants' profession who is noted for his character and learning.[16]

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[3] *Mbh.*, III. 217.7:
Bhavema sarvalokasya vayaṁ mātara uttamāḥ,
Prasādāttava pūjyāśca priyametatkuruṣva naḥ.

[4] *Mbh.*, III. 219.16-7, 23:
Yāsta mātaraḥ pūrvaṁ lokasyāsya prakalpitāḥ,
Asmākaṁ tadbhavetsthānaṁ tāsāṁ caiva na tadbhavet. 16
Bhavema pūjyā lokasya na tāḥ pūjyā surarṣabha,
…… 17
And by Skanda:
Ahaṁ ca vaḥ pradāsyāmi raudramātmānamavyayam,
Paramaṁ tena sahitā sukhaṁ vatsyatha pūjitāḥ. 23

[5] *Mbh.*, III. 219.42-4.
Ye ca mātṛgaṇāḥ proktāḥ puruṣāścaiva ca ye grahāḥ,
Sarve skandagrahā nāma jñeyā nityaṁ śarīribhiḥ 42
Teṣāṁ praśamanaṁ kāryaṁ snānaṁ dhūpamathāñjanam,
Balikarmopahāraśca skandasyejyā viśeṣataḥ 43
Evamete'rcitāḥ sarve prayacchanti śubhaṁ nṛṇām,
Āyurvīryaṁ ca rājendra samyakpūjānamaskṛtāḥ. 44

[6] *Mbh.*, III. 81.47. Bathing in this *Tīrtha* was supposed to give much progeny and great prosperity.

[7] *Mbh.*, XIV. 8.19. The reference is in the form *Mātṛbhaktāya* for Śiva, in the context of salutation to that god.

[8] For the references to the Mātṛs in the *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Vāyu*, *Matsya. Mārkaṇḍeya* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas*, see Dikshitar, *Purāṇa Index*, II, *s.v.*, *Mātaras*, *Matṛs*, *Mātṛkās* and *Mātṛgaṇas*. Many of these are utilized below at appropriate places.

[9] *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 57.56. Some of the *Purāṇas* also give iconographic descriptions of the Mātṛs; see, *e.g.*, *Mat. P.*, ch. 261; *Mār. P.*, 85.11 ff. (tr. Pargiter, 88.11 ff., pp. 502-3); *Viṣ. Dh. P.*, III, ch. 73. A large number of iconographic prescriptions from the Āgamic and other texts are reproduced by Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. II, App. C, pp. 143 ff.

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[10] *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 59.19:

Viṣṇorbhāgavatān magāṁśca savituḥ śambhoḥ sabhasmadvijān,
Mātṛṇāmapi maṇḍalakramavido viprān vidurbrahmaṇaḥ.
Śākyān sarvahitasya śāntamanaso nagnān jinānāṁ viduḥ,
Ye yaṁ devamupāśritāḥ svavidhinā taistasya kāryā kriyā.

[11] *Nāṭya-śāstra*, III. 66:

Namostu nāṭyamātṛbhyo brāhmyādibhyo namo namaḥ.

The offerings and salutation to the Mothers here are preceded by those to Kubera and the other Yakśas and followed by offerings to the weapons of Rudra and Viṣṇu, *etc.* The same Mātṛs seem to be referred to in *Ibid.*, III. 29 and 44, in both of which places they are named along with the Yakṣas. The Nāṭya-kumarīs in *Ibid.*, III. 8 may also be the same. Ghosh is obviously not right in imagining that the Nāṭya-kumārīs are some different and special group of goddesses ignored by the *Purāṇas*, or that Sarasvatī, Dhṛti, Medhā, Hrī, Śrī, Lakṣmī, Mati and Smṛti who are referred to in *Ibid.*, III. 86-7 and called *mātaraḥ*, are the Nāṭya-mātṛs mentioned in the verses cited above; see comments by Ghosh on *Ibid.*, III. 8, 44, 86-7. The word *mātaraḥ* for the eight goddesses, Sarasvtī, *etc.*, in III. 86-7 is to be understood as used in a general sense, or at the most on the pattern of the popular group of the Sapta-or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās.

[12] *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakram*, ed. Devadhar, p. 204:

Maitreya! Gaccha, catuṣpathe balimupahara mātṛbhyaḥ.

[13] *Mṛcchakāṭika*, NSP. edn., Act I, p. 16:

Tadvayasya...gaccha, tvamapi catuṣpathe mātṛbhyo balimupahara.

In the same drama, the Vidūṣaka curses himself in the words: But I, a poor brāhmaṇa will come to grief at every step just as an offering made at the crossroads is gobbled up by dogs (see *Ibid.*, Act I, p. 46), but this need not have any reference to the *Mātr-bali*. In *Kādambarī*, it is said that the queen Vilāsavatī, in the course of performing various rites for a son, also worshipped *digdevatās* while seated in a *maṇḍala* at the crossroads, and again at the crossroads made offerings to Śiva; see *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, pp. 144, 146.

[14] *Mṛcchakaṭika*, NSP. edn., Act. I. p. 16:

Vayasya! mā maivam, gṛhasthasya nityo'yaṁ vidhiḥ.

[15] This is indicated by the casual mention of the rite without elaboration or comment; cf. Wilson, *Theatre of the Hindus*, I. p. 23, fn. on Mātṛs. Wilson, however, does not seem to be right in thinking that the rite was comparable to that of the Pitṛs as enjoined in the *Manusmṛti*, 3.91; see below.

Besides the fact that the rite mentioned in the two dramas consisted of offerings of *bali*, *i.e.*, balls of cooked rice, to the Mātṛs at the crossroads, two other matters of detail are suggested in the context. Firstly, the offering was supposed to take place at the onset of the night; presumably in the dark half of the month, which is suggested not only by the reference to the Vidūṣaka's fear of going out at that unsafe hour and his eventually agreeing when he got a companion with a lamp in her hand,[17] but also by the mention of the moon rising shortly afterwards.[18] Secondly, the night in question was probably of the sixth day of the dark half of the month. As introduced in the *Mṛcchakaṭika*, the Vidūṣaka Maitreya was to present Cārudatta with a new cloak after the latter had finished certain religious rites. The hero's worship of the house-deities and subsequently his instruction to make offerings to the Mothers are acts which are supposed to have followed this particular rite. The text reports the rite as *siddhīkidadevakajjassa*,[19] which, rendered into Sanskrit as *siddhīkṛtadevakāryasya*, would mean 'after (Cārudatta) having finished the worship of the gods'. But the commentary of Pṛthvidhara records a variant *ṣaṣṭhī-vrata-kṛta*,[20] *i.e.*, 'after having finished the *ṣaṣṭhī-vrata*', which seems to have greater claim to originality, not only because it then makes better sense but also because this reading is supported to some extent, by the *Cārudatta* of Bhāsa, which has *saṭṭhīkida-devakayyassa*.[21] It would appear that the cloak was to be presented to Cārudatta after he had finished certain rites in connection with the *vrata* observed on the sixth day of the month. Probably on that date Cārudatta had observed a fast which was supposed to be ceremonially broken in the evening,[22] just as, later in the drama, the hero's wife speaks of having observed the Ratnasaṣṭhi fast that day.[23]

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[16] This is suggested throughout the drama. Albeit in a merchants' profession, Cārudatta is proud of his brāhmaṇa lineage, follows the brahmanical way of life, is a connossieur of good poetry and music, *etc.* All the characters in the drama, including the guards, the judges of the court and the executioners, show due deference to him.

[17] The time is indicated as *Padosavelāe* (*pradoṣavelāyāṁ*), when the *rājamārga* would be unsafe because of the courtesans, their parasites, royal servants, *etc.*, moving about; see *Mṛcchakaṭika*, NSP. edn., Act I, pp. 16-7. In fact, throughout this opening act, there are allusions to the onset of the night, as in Vasantasenā, pursued by Śakāra, disappearing in the night's darkness (see *Ibid.*, pp. 27-8), Vidūṣaka enjoying the gentle night breeze (*Ibid.*, p. 33), Cārudatta's son suffering from the chilliness of the evening (*Ibid.*, p. 41), *etc.* See *Ibid.*, p. 30, where Cārudatta agrees to let Radanikā accompany the Vidūṣaka and the latter asks the maid to carry a lamp along with the *bali*.

[18] *kṛtaṁ pradīpikābhiḥ. Paśya: Udayati hi Śaśāṅkaḥ, etc.*, spoken by Cārudatta; see *Ibid.*, p. 47. It is curious, however, that when Cārudatta returns, past midnight, from the musical concert, we are told of the setting of the moon, and soon after the housebreaking by Śarvilaka takes place.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[21] *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakram*, ed. Devadhar, p. 195.

[22] See *Mṛcchakaṭika*, ed. Kale, Notes, p. 16.

Other important evidences of the prevalence of the Mātṛ-cult come from the works of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. In the *Harṣacarita*, when king Puṣpabhūti wished to see the Bhairavācārya, he was informed that the ascetic was staying in a *bilva-vāṭikā* to the north of an old *mātṛ-gṛha*.[24] On hearing about his father's illness, Harṣa returned to find all kinds of rites being performed to restore the king to health. One such rite is described as *kvaciddīpikā-dahyamāna-kulaputraka-prasādyamāna-mātṛmaṇḍalam*,[25] which is tanslated by Cowell and Thomas as "There young nobles were burning themselves with lamps to propitiate the Mothers."[26] A rite analogous to the one in the *Cārudatta* and the *Mṛcchakaṭika* seems to be referred to in a simile of the *Harṣacarita*, where Haṁsavega, overwhelmed at Harṣa's acceptance of the proposal of friendship of Kumāra (Bhāskaravarman) of Prāgjyotiṣa, goes on to recount the fate of a man in servitude, a royal servant, a man in distress (a fate which can never be likeable to a respectable person), and, in that context, says of such a man: *niśāsvapi mātṛ-bali-piṇḍasyeva dikṣu vikṣipyamāṇasya*, *i.e.*, "who is thrown in various directions (sent out on various errands) like the *mātṛbalipiṇḍa* even at night."[27] In the *Kādambarī*, where the queen Vilāsavatī is portrayed as performing all manner of rites and propitiating various gods to obtain a son, we are told that she used to resort to the neighbouring shrines of the Mātṛkās, in whom faith was displayed by the people (*aarśita-pratyayāni sannihita-mātṛkā-bhavanāni jagāma*).[28] The expression *darśita-pratyayāni* is very significant here and eloquently speaks of the popularity and influence of these goddesses.[29] Further, the long and gruesome description of the old Tamil priest of the Caṇḍikā temple in the forest includes: "His cheeks had been badly scratched in encounters with bears hiding in abandoned Mātṛ-shrines."[30]

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[23] *Mṛcchakaṭika*, NSP. edn., Act III, p. 94.

[24] *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 3rd *Ucchvāsa*, p. 46:
Asya jīrṇa-mātṛ-gṛhasyottareṇa bilivavāṭikā madhyāste.

[25] *Ibid.*, 5th *Ucchvāsa*, p. 21. In *Ibid* , fn. 1, *dahana-dahyamāna* is noted as a variant for *dahyamāna* accepted in the text.

[26] *Harṣacarita*, tr. Cowell and Thomas, p. 135. There seems to be some difference of opinion about the nature of this special propitiation. Thus, according to Kane, the young nobles did not burn their limbs; they rather kept lamps on their heads to propitiate the Mothers and now and then got burnt accidentally; see *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, Notes, p. 71. He points out that even now worshippers of Ambikā are in the habit of placing lamps on their heads and reverently going round the idol, and suggests comparison with *jvalita-lohita-mūrdha-ratna-raśmibhiḥ kṛṣṇa-sarpairapi śirodhṛta-maṇi-dīpakair-ivārādhyamānām* of *Kādambarī*. Agrawala seems to understand the expression simply as propitiating the Mātṛs by burning lamps; see *Harṣacarita-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 89. However, an even more painful mode of propitiating these deities is recorded in the *Yaśastilaka* of Somadeva.

[27] *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 7th *Ucchvāsa*, p. 65.

[28] *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, p. 145. Parab here accepts the reading *sannidhāna*, and gives *sannihita*, as also *sannidha*, as variants. Since there is no difference in meaning, *sannihita* may be accepted as the better expression which is adopted in some editions of the text. Later, Vilāsavatī is again depicted as propitiating the Avanti-mātṛs for the safe return of her son Candrāpīḍa: "...*candrāpīḍasyaivāgamanāyopayācitaṁ kartum-avanntī-nāma-nagarī-devatā nām avantī-mātṛṇāmāyatanaṁ nirgatā Vilāsavatī*..."; see *Ibid.*, p. 649. Perhaps the same shrine of the Mothers as above is intended here. Bhānucandra's commentary definitely identifies the Avanti-mothers as the Sapta-mātṛikās, Brāhmī, *etc*. Cf. Agrawala, *Kādambarī-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 305 and fn. 1.

None of the instances quoted above look like literary cliches used as embellishment. Since all are casual and incidental and occur in the respective narratives without any comment, they create the impression that, in the early centuries of the Christian era, the Mātṛs were well-known objects of widespread popular worship, and the authors of our texts were familiar with them, with their sacred places, and with various rites performed in their honour.[31]

Archaeology provides excellent corroboration of the above literary allusions. The well-known Gaṅgdhār stone-tablet inscription, of the (Mālava) year 480 (=A.D. 422.3),[32] which opens with an invocation to Viṣṇu and records that Mayūrākṣa, a minister of king Viśvavarman, caused to be built a temple of Viṣṇu and a large drinking well, also goes on to record in lines 35-7 that, for the sake of religious merit, the counsellor of the king caused to be built "this very terrible abode...of the Divine Mothers (*Mātṛṇāñca*)." Since Mayūrākṣa was professedly a devotee of Viṣṇu,[33] his building a shrine for the Mātṛs indicates not only that he looked at these goddesses with favour but also that they were already popular divinities of the locality, most likely among the masses.[34] The village Gaṅgdhār, it may be noted, is in the erstwhile Jhālāwāḍ State in the Western Malwa Division of the Madhya Pradesh, and Fleet also thought that the name of the village must be connected with the river Gargarā, mentioned in the inscription, on whose banks stood the city said to have been adorned with temples, *etc.*, by Mayūrākṣa and where presumably the shrines of Viṣṇu and the Mātṛs were built.

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[29] See the relevant commentary by Bhānucandra. Also, cf. *Mbh.*, IX. 45.2:
Yaśasvinīnāṁ mātṛṇāṁ śṛṇu nāmāni bhārata,
Yābhirvyāptāstrayo lokāḥ kalyāṇībhiścarācarāḥ.

[30] *Kādambarī*, ed. Parab, p. 462: *Asakṛd-utsann-ādevā-mātṛgṛha-vāsya-ṛkṣa-nakha-jarjarita-kapolena.* Bhānucandra's commentary does not explain *devamātṛgṛha*, but there is no doubt that a shrine of the Mothers is meant; see Agrawala, *Kādambarī-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 231. A modern Sanskrit commentary by Kṛṣṇamohana Śāstrī specifies the Mātṛs as *Brāhmīprabhṛti*; see *Kādambarī*, ed. Kṛṣṇamohana Śāstrī, p. 647.

[31] Commenting on *darśita-pratyayāni, etc.*, of *Kādambarī* Agrawala says that for the worship of the Mātṛ goddesses, every village had in its vicinity a *Mātṛ-bhavana* where images of several Mātṛs were installed. In the excavations at Ahicchatrā one such shrine, he notes, was discovered in which about fifty images of the Mātṛ goddesses were found together; *Kādambarī-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 70, fn. 4. Agrawala does not cite the source about the Ahicchatrā excavations, but apparently he refers to his own "Terracotta Figurines of Ahicchatrā, *etc.*", *AI*, no. 4, 1947-8, Type 29, pp. 171 ff., where he notices the discovery of about forty clay-idols, all except two females, found lying in fragments on a platform built against the city wall in the south-east corner of plot AC V. After noting in detail the common features of these idols, he tentatively suggests identification with Ṣaṣṭhī—the "brahmanical counterpart of the Buddhist Hāritī", although here too he notes that the platform on which these figures were found, in association with half a dozen figures of Mahiṣāsuramardinī, was probably used "as a shrine of the Mother-Goddesses, or *mātṛ-bhavana*, as it is called by Bāṇabhaṭṭa, where different female tutelary deities worshipped by the village people were installed together...". The idols seem to be dated by Agrawala to a period between A.D. 550-750. They are crude in appearance; many are three-headed and some specimens hold a chid. If their identification with the well-known Mātṛs could be accepted, it would indicate the popularity of the Mātṛ cult in the region of Western U.P. in late Gupta period, the essentially popular nature of the cult, and the uncertain number of goddesses included in the Mātṛ-group.

[32] Fleet, *CII*, III: *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings, etc.*, no. 17, pp. 72-8.

[33] The minister is qualified in pls. 25-6 of the inscription as one who is displaying by means of lawfully acquired riches, the most extreme devotion towards the god Viṣṇu who holds *cakra* and *gadā*.

From the same general area comes another important record testifying to the popularity of the Mātṛ-cult.[35] This slightly damaged inscription, datable towards the end of the 6th century A.D., is engraved on a rock-cut flight of steps leading down the south side of the Deogarh Fort (Jhansi Dist., U.P.) to the banks of the river Betwa. It begins with an invocation to the divine Mothers as : "May the group of the Mothers, the Mothers of the Universe, having their dwelling in…and having powers fit for the preservation of the world, be for your welfare,"[36] and records that a person called Svāmibhaṭa caused to be constructed on that hill "a very costly and indestructible abode for the Mothers."[37] It is highly probable that the builder in this case too belonged to a

[34] It is not infrequently found that a builder of a religious edifice, or a donor, who caused his pious act to be recorded in an inscription, also expressed his personal faith, or that of his family, in a particular deity through explicit statements or pithy epithets. But there are also instances of such persons building shrines for deities, or making donations for faiths, other than their own. To quote a few such instances at random which roughly belong to the period with which we are concerned: (i) Mahārāja Vainyagupta, who was a devotee of Śiva, made gifts for the worship of Buddha; see Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, I, pp. 340 ff.; (ii) the Ucchakalpa Mahārāja Śarvanātha, who seems to have been a devotee of Viṣṇu, made a grant for the temple of Sun; see Fleet, *CII*, III, no. 28, pp. 125 ff.; (iii) the Maitraka king Droṇasiṁha, who is called *Paramamāheśvara* (*e.g.*, in Maliya Cop. Pl. grant of Mahārāja Dharasena II, Fleet, *CII*, III, no. 38, pp. 164 ff.), made a grant to a local goddess Pāṇḍurājyā; see Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, I, p. 426; (iv) another Maitraka ruler Śīlāditya I, called *Phramamāheśvara* made grants for the worship of the Sun-god; see *EI*, XXI, no. 18, pp. 116 ff. (It is interesting that this king is also shown as a patron of Buddhism; see Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 63); (v) Śarvavarman Maukharī, who calls himself *Paramamāheśvara* in his own Asīrgadh seal, seems to have confirmed a grant to a Sun temple; see Fleet, *CII*, III, no. 46, pp. 213 ff.; (vi) Mahāśivagupta, who called himself *Paramamāheśvara* and built shrines for Śiva (see *EI*, XXVII, no. 50, pp. 319 ff; *Ibid.*, XXXI, no. 5, pp. 31 ff.), also made donations to Buddhist monasteries; see *EI*, XXIII, pp. 113 ff., *etc*. Instances where a prince or a noble built shrines or made donations for a deity to whom he owed allegiance would be good evidence of the personal faith of the individual concerned and, to that extent, of the popularity of that deity. But when such persons are seen bestowing the same favour upon other gods or faiths, especially in different and separated areas, it should be best understood in terms of the religious need of that area and, therefore, indicative of the real popularity of the deities or cults concerned. The Mātṛs, therefore, must have been quite popular deities of the region for them to have attracted the attention of the minister Mayūrākṣa.

[35] Sahni, Daya Ram, "Deogarh Rock Inscriptions of Svāmibhaṭa", *EI*, XVIII, no. 15, pp. 125-7.

[36] *…sthānāṁ jagadrakṣākṣamaujasāṁ*
Mātṛṇāṁ lokamātṛṇāṁ maṇḍalaṁ bhūtayestu vaḥ.

[37] The verse 6 of the inscription runs as:
Tena kāritamattrādrāvarthinevārcitārthinā,
Preyaḥ priyaprasādānāṁ mātṛṇāṁ kṣayamakṣayamiti.

princely family, since the genealogical portion of the record calls Svāmibhaṭa the grandson of Gomilaka who was an ornament of the Solar race, the son of Keśava who was comparable to Viṣṇu and whose fame was widespread, and himself a man of great powers and fame. The inscription is engraved immediately above a niche which contains a panel of the Divine Mothers Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhi, Indrāṇī and Cāmuṇḍā, fianked by Vīrabhadra and Gaṇapati, and the editor thought that the abode of the Mothers whose erection the epigraph records is probably identical with this niche.[38]

The Mātṛs are also referred to in another inscription, of a slightly later date than the Gaṅgdhār inscription, from the Bihar Sharif sub-division of the Patna District in Bihar.[34] Unfortunately it is too fragementary to reveal reliable information in any detail. It is engraved on a stone pillar and is abviously in two parts. The first part, which mentions in the beginning at least two generations of a family which may have been connected by marriage with Kumāragupta I of the Imperial Gupta dynasty, seems to record the erection of a column in or in front of a shrine which was in some way connected with the Mātṛs. The legible relevant portions in lines 7 and 8 of the inscription are translated by Fleet as "...by (the presence of) Bhadāryā, the house shines...", and "...headed by Skanda and by the Divine Mothers, on the earth (*...skandapradhānairbhuvi-mātṛbhiśca...*).' Bhadrāryā, is again referred to in line 10, and this as well as line 11 seems to refer to some permanent endowment, apparently for the shrine concerned. The second part of the inscription, of which line 32 mentions Bhadrāryakā, probably identical with Bhadrāryā of the first part, again seems to record a perpetual endowment at the command of the reigning Gupta king, who may have been Skandagupta or Pūrugupta. Apart from the probability that there may be a reference here to a Mātṛ temple and some building activity connected with it carried on by a person of ministerial rank, as also a perpetual endowment to the temple, the only certain information revealed by the inscription is the complimentary manner in which the Mātṛs are referred to, and their association with Skanda and Bhadrāryā. The identification of the latter is uncertain. Agarwala suggested that she might be the same as Bhadrā, who was regarded as the wife of Kubera, and, emphasizing āryā, Sircar identified her with Pārvatī.[40]

It may be noted for the sake of completeness of the contemporary picture, that the Mātṛs must have become sufficiently important divinities for the early Kadambas and Cālukyas of Badami to have adopted them, along with Svāmī Mahāsena or Kārttikeya, as their tutelary deities.[41] Both the dyansties seem to have been of indigeneous, local,

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38. If this is true, the inscription cannot be very much earlier than 600 A.D., because the description of the carved images as given by ths editor suggests a developed iconography.
39. Fleet, *CII*, III, no. 12, pp. 47 ff.; also Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, I, no. 30, pp. 325 ff.
40. See Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, I, p. 328, fn. 1, where is also cited Agrawala, *JNSI*, III, p. 82. Sircar also notes that *Bhadra* is a name of Śiva.
41. Cf. Fleet, *CII.*, III, p. 48, fn. 1. *Svāmi-mahāsena-mātṛgaṇānudhyātānāṁ* and *Saptalokamātṛbhis=saptamātṛbhirabhivardhitānāṁ kārttikeya-parirakṣaṇa-prāpta-kalyāṇa-paramparāṇāṁ* are almost stock phrases in the early Kadamba and Cālukya records respectively. For the Kadambas, see, *e.g.*, (Contd.)

origin.[42] The Kadambas were probobly brāhmaṇas; they certainly betray a marked brahmanical outlook.[43] The Cālukyas of Badami, as would appear from their *varāha-lāñchana* and occasional *paramabhāgavata* title, probably professed Viṣṇuism as their personal faith, but they were very liberal in outlook and some of the later kings seem to have embraced other creeds.[44] What is noteworthy is that the two important royal families of the Deccan favoured the Mātṛs even while showing personal preferences to other deities and other creeds. The association of Mahāsena-Kārttikeya with the Mātṛs in their epigraphs is also significant, and, as far as we know, in epigraphy the Mātṛs are specifically counted as seven for the first time in the early Cālukya records.[45]

The difficulties of making definite identifications of sculptural remains with divine figures of cult and mythology, especially in the evolutionary stage of iconography, have been noted above.[46] The available Mātṛkā images are so labelled today because they appear to illustrate well-known iconographic descriptions in brahmanical texts. The *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* is the earliest text to give suggestions of a standardisation of the iconographic forms of the Mātṛs: Without specifying their names or number, it simply lays down: "Mātṛs are to be made with cognizances of the gods corresponding to their names."[47] But standard lists of Mātṛs, specifying their names and number, were soon complied, which are now utilized in identifying the icons: There are many variations in these lists, but the usually accepted one, which seems to agree with the available sculptural material is, as noted in the beginning of the chapter, of the Sapta-mātṛkās, consisting of Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Māhendrī, Vārahī and Cāmuṇḍā.[48]

The Mātṛ-icons are recognizable from about the beginning of the Christian era. In his catalogue of Brahmanical images in the Mathura Musuem, Agrawala lists several Mātṛkā panels of the Kuṣāṇa period.[49] According to him, one of the most complete

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"Tālaguṇḍā Pillar Inscription of Kākusthavarman", *EI*, VIII, no. 5, pp. 24 ff.; "Halsi Plates of Ravivarman", *IA*, VI, pp. 26-7; "Nilambur Plates of Ravivarman," *EI*, VIII, no. 13, pp. 146 ff.; Kudgere Plates of Vijaya-Śiva-Māndhātṛvarman and Bannahalli Plates of Kṛṣṇavarman II in "Two Kadamba Grants", *EI*, VI, no. 2, pp. 12 ff.; *etc.* For the Cālukyas, see "Hyderabad Plates of Satyāśraya (Pulakeśin II)", *IA*, VI, pp. 73-5; "Gadval Plates of Vikramāditya I", *EI*, X, no. 22, pp. 100 ff.; "Vakkalerī Plates of Kīrtivarman II", *EI*, V, no. 22, pp. 200-5; Timmapuram Plates of Viṣṇuvardhana I, *EI*, IX, no. 50, pp. 317 ff.; a grant of Jayasiṁha I in *IA*, XIII, pp. 137-8; "Nausārī Plates of Satyāśraya Śīlāditya", *EI*, VIII, no. 22, pp. 229 ff. It is sometimes suspected that the phrases expressing adoration to Kārttikeya and the Mothers, along with *Mānavyagotra* and the metronymic *Hāritīputra* were borrowed by the Cālukyas from their Kadamba precursors in the area; see Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 228.

[42] See Majumdar (ed), *The Clasical Age*, pp. 227 ff., 270 ff.

[43] See Sircar, *The Successors of the Sātavāhanas*, pp. 288 ff.

[44] See Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 228.

[45] Individual member, however, are not specified.

[46] See above, Ch. I, discussion of archaeological evidence on goddesses.

[47] *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 57.56:

> *Mātṛgaṇaḥ kartavyaḥ svanāmadevānurūpakṛtachinaḥ.*

[48] See Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 505.

[49] Agrawala, *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art*, pp. 59 ff. The author has listed twenty-two Mātṛ panels, complete and fragmentary, of which seventeen are assigned to the Kuṣāṇa period, the rest being medieval; see also his *Mathura Museum Catalogue*, pt. IV: Architectural Pieces, *etc.*, pp. 125-6, for some other Mātṛkā reliefs of the Kuṣāṇa period.

ones, assignable to the early Kuṣāṇa period and earliest from the point of view of evolution,[50] shows a row of seven identical standing female figures, the right hand of each raised in *abhaya mudrā* and the suspended left holding a water-pot, with a male figure at the right standing in the same *mudrā* and holding a staff-like object in the left hand, The number seven of the female figures is noteworthy, as also the presence of the male guardian deity at the right. A similar guardian may be persumed also at the left end, which is broken. As far as the number of deities is concerned, the panel fulfils two important requirements of the standardised Sapta-mātṛkās of a later age, according to which the seven Mothers should be flanked on the two sides respectively by Vīrabhadra (or Vīrēśvara) and Gaṇeśa.[51] The identification of the panel thus appears beyond doubt, especially in view of the staff or spear-holding guardian at the right.[52] But no distinction whatever, is made in the female figures. They are all alike, ordinary females without any distinguishing symbols or vehicles." All of them wear ear-pendants, bracelets and anklets, and are clad in long skirts instead of *dhotīs*. The only sign of divinity is the upraised right hand granting fearlessness—a very common feature in the early stages of the development of Indian iconography.[53]

Agrawala lists an almost exactly similar piece in the Mathura Musuem,[54] but, as far as the available specimens of the Kuṣāṇa period are concerned, the panels with seven females are more an exception than a rule. Even allowing for the probability of similar panels in fragmentary reliefs showing four or five goddesses, there are several depicting only three,[55] one complete in itself and undamaged, clearly indicating that the number seven of the Mothers was still not standardised.[56]

Other interesting aspects of the Kusāna Mātṛs of Mathura are their frequent depiction with animal faces,[57] and the occasional depiction of seated Mātṛs with children in their laps.[58] Sometimes worshippers in *añjali-mudrā* are included,[59] and in one relief, between the four devotees on the one side and the two Mothers on the other, as a vase from which emerges the bust of the guardian figure with a staff in his left hand.[60]

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[50] *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art*, p. 59, F. 38. Agrawala does not illustrate the figures listed by him in the *Catelogue*, but the description shows that he has reproduced a line-drawing of the same in his *Indian Art*, p. 1, LIII, fig. 184, fac. p. 260.

[51] An extract from *Rūpamaṇḍana*, reproduced by Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. II, App. C, p. 154, runs as:
Vīreśvaraśca bhagavānvṛṣārūḍho dhanurdharaḥ,
Vīṇāhastatriśūlā ca mātṛṇāmagrato bhavet.
Madhye ca mātaraḥ kāryā ante teṣāṁ vināyakaḥ.

[52] This staff-or spear holding guardian, with right hand raised in *abhaya mudrā*, seems very common in the Mātṛ images of the Kuṣāṇa period from Mathura. One may be tempted to identify him with Śaktidhara Kārttikeya, especially in view of this god's association with the Mātṛs in the *Mahābhārata* also *cf.* an image of Kārttikeya, 2nd cent. A.D., from Mathura, reproduced, facing p. 237, in Agrawala's *Matsya Purāṇa—A Study*), but the iconographic texts would not support it. Could he be Śiva as *śūlin*? According to Agrawala, they are just *āyudhapuruṣas* which were precursors of Vārabhadra and Gaṇeśa in the development of Mātṛ inconography; see his comments on G. 57 in *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art*, p. 60.

[53] *Cf.* Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, I, p. 29.

[54] Agrawala, *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art*, p. 60, no. 126.

[55] Some fragmentary reliefs show only two goddesses.

[56] Agrawala, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-1, no. 1046.

[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 60-2, nos. 880, 929, 1002, 2331 and 2491.

It is clear that the early images of the Mātṛs from Mathura betray only an emergent iconography, not yet standardised, but Agarwala appears to be off the mark when, explaining the animal-faced females, he suggests that the figures were distinguished not by their respective *vāhanas* but by the animal faces borrowed from them.[61] He seems to imply that the animal faces of the Mothers are to be understood as normal steps towards standardisation of the Septa-mātṛkās, distinguished by their respective mounts. This is far from certain. Firstly, not in all cases are the amimal faces clearly recognizable.[62] When they are, we can see a lion-faced female beside a boar-faced one; in other cases, a human-faced female is depicted by the side of animal-faced ones—once with a bull-faced figure. Now, to readily identify this last as Māheśvarī, and the other two as Nārasiṁhī and Vārāhī would suggest that Nārasiṁhi was already well on the way to becoming a Mātṛkā—one of the seven—whereas, the truth is that this goddess is very infrequently counted as a Mātṛkā even in iconographic prescriptions[63] and her actual sculptural representations are quite rare.[64] Perhaps the best explanation of the animal faces of the Mothers here would be that, consistent with their origin and nature as reflected in the epic stories, they were, in the early period, popularly conceived of as having a variety of animal faces and fierce forms.[65] In the *Mahābhārata,* stress is laid on the capacity of the Mātṛs to assume any form at will, and once they express the desire to eat up human progeny in this way.[66] The Mātṛs appear as companions of Skanda in the epic,[67] and the description of the fierce, form of the Mothers in the *Śalya parvan*[68] has great resemblance to the fierce, animal-faced *Pāriṣadas* of Skanda in the same place.[69] It is possible that, like the other companions of Skanda, the Mātṛs were imagined as also having animal faces.

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58. Agrawala pp. 60-1, nos. F. 31, F. 34, 929, 1179 and 2331.
59. *Ibid* , pp. 60-1, nos. G. 57 and 1179.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 61. no. 1179. On the basis of the vase here as in Vasudhārā images, and the children as in the lap of Hārītī, Agrawala imagines an intimate connection of the Mātṛs with these deities, and suggests that the Mātṛs were invoked as goddesses of fertility and child-birth.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 61; see comments on no. 2331.
62. See, *e.g.*, *Ibid.*, pp. 60-2, nos. 880 and 2491. Even while making his comments on no. 2331, Agrawala is not able to identify the animal faces.
63. See below.
64. For the description of a mediaeval Nārasiṁhī figure from Satna (Madhya Pradesh), now in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, see, *DHI*, p. 508.
65. For the discussion on the nature of the Mātṛs, see below.
66. The Mātṛs are described as *nānārūpāḥ* in *Mbh.*, IX. 45. 29; as *kāmarūpadharāḥ* in *ibid.*, v. 21; see also *Ibid.*, III. 219. 19.
67. See below.
68. See below.
69. See *Mbh.*, IX. 44. 73 ff. for the animal-faced *Pāriṣadas* of Skanda.

No Mātṛkā images of the Gupta period are listed by Agrawala in his catalogue of the Mathura Museum, but such images are reported from other places.[70] Most probably of this period, there is a badly damaged relief of the Seven Mothers in the Udayagiri caves near Vidiśa,[71] and from the same place, near the ancient site of the famous Heliodorus Pillar, were discovered seven almost identical figures of goddesses which were identified by Patil as Sapta-Mātṛikās and assigned to the early Gupta period.[72] These figures, now preserved in the Gwalior Museum,[73] are also damaged, but enough remains to suggest the identification. They are identical in size and style, thus suggesting a group. Two-armed, they are all shown seated on stools, and three have each a child portrayed with them. In spite of much damage, the general similarity of the figures seems to confirm the impression that even by the time of the Gupta rule in northern India, the distinctions in Mātṛ icons had not crystalized.[74] To the Gupta period are also assigned some other individual Mātṛkā figures in the Gwalior Museum,[75] and several individual Māṛtkās from Gujarat and Saurāṣṭra, although many of the latter might not be earlier than 600 A.D..[76]

With the increasing temple-building activity in the early mediaeval period—by carving live rocks or erecting structural edifices—Mātṛkā panels or slabs, with some variations both in the number and identity of the goddesses[77] become common after the 7th century A.D.. Thus early mediaeval individual icons of Brāhmi, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Aindrī, Vārāhī and Cāmuṇḍā—the last two quite common—and occasionally Nārasiṁhī, are reported from the Gujarat-Saurāṣṭra region and south-western Rajasthan,[78] and even more impressive pieces come from Orissa.[79] Some of the best specimens of the panels of seven or eight Mātṛkās together, fianked by Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa, are found in rock-cut shrines and structural temples in the Deccan, as at Ellora,[80] Elephanta,[81] Aihole,[82] *etc.* These shrines are all datable after 600 A.D. and generally Śivaite in nature. In fact the Mātṛkās are found in early mediaeval Śivaite temples all over India.[83]

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[70] Agrawala, however, notes some Mother-and-Child figures and one possible Kaumārī of the Gupta period in the Mathura Museum; see *Mathura Museum Catalogue*, pt. III: Jaina Tīrthaṁkaras, *etc.*, p. 59, no. 104.

[71] Patil, *Monuments of the Udayagiri Hill*, p. 26, as cited in *PIHC*, XII, 1949 ('50), p. 110 and fn. 3. Cunningham refers to two such reliefs and labels them as *Aṣṭa-śakti*; see *ASR*, X, pp. 48, 50.

[72] Patil, "Sapta-mātṛkās or the Seven Mothers from Besnagar", *PIHC*, XII, 1949 ('50), pp. 109-12, and the plate accompanying it.

[73] See Thakore, *Catalogue of Sculptures in the Archaeological Museum, Gwaloir, M.B.*, pp. 3-4.

[74] Cf. Patil, *op. cit.*, *PIHC*, XII, pp. 110-1.

[75] Thakore, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 10. The Brahmāṇī listed on p. 10 is dated as later Gupta.

[76] Goetz, H., "Gupta Sculptures from Northern Gujarat," *JGRS*, XIV, no. 1, Jan. 1952, pp. 1-5, in which individual Mātṛkā figures from the erstwhile Idar State in the Gujarat-Saurāṣṭra region are published. The author dates them approximately to the first half of the 6th century A.D. and calls them of Baroque Gupta Style. Of those illustrated, the identification of Cāmuṇḍā (fig. 5) is certain, but figs. 1 and 2 are labelled Mātṛkās because they appear as haloed goddesses with a child. U.P. Shah, in "Gupta Sculptures from Old Idar State (Northern Gujarat)", *JIM*, IX, 1953, pp. 90-103, and "A Few Brahmanical Sculptures in the Baroda Museum", *BBMPG*, X-XI, 1953-5, pp. 19 ff., refers to some individual Mātṛkās of the Gupta period, but many of these might be later; cf. general comments on the author's liberal early dating of the Śāmlājī sculptures in *Lalit Kalā*, no. 8, Oct. 1960, pp. 83-4.

[77] This will be apparent from the references below, but an instance may be cited of an interesting Mātṛkā panel from the Gujarat region datable to the middle of the 8th century A.D., which, though complete in itself as far as the composition is concerned, shows only five goddesses; see Goetz, " 'Late Gupta' Sculptures from Pāṭan-Aṇhilwāḍa: Archaeological Evidence on Vanarāja and Cāpotkaṭa Dynasty", *BBMPG*, VII, 1949-50, pp. 31-2.

There can be no question, therefore, of the great popularity of the Mātṛkā figures from the 7th century A.D. onwards. It is, however, necessary to remember that, as far as can be conjectured from the size of the individual icons or detached slabs and reports of the circumstances of their finds, coupled with the absence of dedicatory inscriptional labels, few Mātṛ-icons can be regarded with any certainity as cult-icons, specially installed in a shrine for worship. It is, of course, not entirely unlikely that at least some of them were actual cult-images;[84] and any concentration of such icons in a specific area should lead to the same conclusion, especially in view of literary references to Mātṛ-shrines in that area and independent inscriptional evidence to corroborate them. But there is no doubt that the majority of these icons decorated the temple walls[85] Neverthless, the fact of their frequent appearance on the temples is itself a measure of their popularity, and, if corroborated by other evidence, may be taken to point to the fact that they were very alive in the public mind and appropriated their share of popular worship.

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[78] For Gujarat-Saurāṣṭra region, besides Goetz and Shah above (fns. 76, 77), see Majumdar, M.R., "A Post-Gupta Mātṛkā Group from Western India", *JGRS*, April 1950, pp. 88-91; Mankad, B.L., "Mātṛkā and Related Images in the Baroda Museum and their Background", with an appendix by H. Goetz, *BBMPG*, VII, 1949-50, pp. 39-47, *etc.* See also Soundara Rajan, K.V. and Parikh, R.T., "A Magnificent Sapta-mātṛkā Group and Pārvatī from Vadaval, North Gujarat", *BPWM*, 7, 1959-62, pp. 46 ff. For Rajasthan, see Agrawala, R.C., "Some Unpublished Sculptures from South-western Rajasthan", *Lalit Kalā*, no. 6, Oct. 1959, pp. 63 ff.; "Some Interesting Sculptures from Devangana, Rajasthan", *Ibid.*, no. 8, Oct. 1960, pp. 69 ff.; "More Sculptures from Āmjhara, Rajasthan", *Arts Asiatiques*, XII, 1965, pp. 175 ff. See also Agrawala, R.C., "The Aṣṭamāṭkās of Marwar", *IHQ*, XXIX, no. 4, Dec. 1953, pp. 393 ff.; "A Rare Image of Vārāhī in the British Museum", *Oriental Art*, *NS.*, IX, no. 3, Autumn 1963, p. 167.

[79] Chanda, Ramprasad, "Explorations in Orissa", *MASI*, no. 44, pp. 3-4, 14 ff., where magnificent specimens of Mātṛ images, some nearly 9 ft. high, from Jaipur and the banks of the Mārkaṇḍeśvara tank at Puri are noticed. Chanda assigns them to the "early mediaeval period" and, more specifically, to the 8th century A.D.; see *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 14; *cf.* also Panigrahi, *Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswer*, pp. 136-7, 249-50.

[80] Gupte and Mahajan, *Ajanta, Eliora and Aurangabad Caves*, pp. 182, 202-3, 207, 213-4 and 215.

[81] Sastri, *A Guide to Elephanta*, p. 50.

[82] Gupte, *The Art and Architecture of Aihole*, pp. 29; 57, 59, 91-2 and 108-11.

[83] See Mankad, *op. cit.*, *BBMPG*, VII, 1949-50, p. 42, fn. 22, where several sources are cited giving information about the Mātṛikā images in the early mediaeval period; see also Soundara Rajan, K.V., "Some Iconographic Elements in the Pre-mediaeval Rajasthan Temples", *Lalit-Kalā*, no. 8, Oct. 1960, pp. 15 ff., esp. p. 22. For the Sapta-mātṛkas in the mediaeval temples of Bhubaneśvara and some other sites in Orissa, see Panigrahi, *Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar*, pp. 71, 72, 79, 80, 87, 91, 92, 135-7 and 249. Mediaeval Mātṛkā panels in the Mathura Museum are already noticed; one such panel in the Lucknow Museum is reproduced by Hiranand Shastri, *The Origin and Cult of Tārā*, *MASI*, 20, pp. 3-4 and pl. IIb.

[84] The colossal Mātṛkās of Orissa would assert their nature as cult images by their very impressive size.

[85] Cf. Mankad, *op. cit.*, *BBMPG*, VII, 1949-50, pp. 42-3.

NATURE OF THE MĀTṚS, THEIR NUMBER AND NAMES

It was found necessary to introduce the concept of the so-called Septa-mātṛkās to assess the sculptural evidence, of the Mātṛcult, but, as hinted at in the beginning of the chapter, so far as literary notices, go, the Sapta-mātṛkās are only a specialized form of the Mātṛs. We may, therefore, ask the question : who were the Mātṛs, and what was their original and essential nature?

The brahmanical Purāṇic literature has a more or less standard form of myth to account for the Mātṛs, in which, while the basic structure of the story remain almost unchanged, the details and names of some principal characters vary. The Mātṛs, in these stories, are imagined as personified energies of seven or eight of the principal brahmanic gods, and appear to aid Śiva or his consort Devī in destroying a particular demon and his hosts.

In the *Devi-māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, the gods, thoroughly vanquished by the two demons Śumbha and Niśumbha, pray to Ambikā to save them, and the Goddess, offering them protection, engages herself in a gruesome battle with the demon host.[86] At the start of the battle, the demon Dhūmralocana and the contingent following him are destroyed by Ambikā. Then Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, with their well-arrayed army, meet with a similar fate at the hands of Kāī, "of the terrible countenance," who is said to have emanated from Ambikā's forehead grown "dark as ink" in anger.[87] We are told here that because she destroyed the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, Kāli would be known in the world as Cāmuṇḍa.[88] The feet of killing Śumbha and Niśumbha is reserved for the goddess Ambikā-Caṇḍika herself. As the story continues, when Śumbha enraged at the losses the demons had suffered, attacked the Goddess, "there issued forth, endowed with excessive vigour and strength, the Energies (*śaktayaḥ*) from the bodies of Brahmā, Śiva, Guha (*i.e.*, Kumāra Kārttikeya), Viṣṇu and Indra, and went in the forms of those gods to Caṇḍikā. Whatever, was the form of each god, and whatever, his ornaments and vehicle, in that very appearance his Energy advanced to fight the Asuras."[89] At this place is introduced an almost iconographic description of the *Śaktis* of Brahmā, Maheśvara, Kumāra, Viṣṇú, Hari (presumed to be the Varāha form of Viṣṇu), Nṛsiṁha and Indra, making a group of seven.[90] Naturally, there is no mention of Cāmuṇḍā, since, as Kāli, she is already present in Devi's ranks. Instead, we are informed of an Energy of the goddess Caṇḍikā herself, called Śivadūti.[91] In the description of the battle that ensued, the individual performances of these *Śaktis,* including Kāli and Śivadūti, are noted,[92] and, collectively, they are called *Mātṛ-gaṇa* or *Mātṛs.*[93] Raktavija, from every drop of whose blood falling upon the earth sprang up a similar demon, is said to have been destroyed by Kāli-Cāmuṇḍā,[94] and Śumbha and Niśumbha were finally killed by Caṇḍikā.

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[86] *Mār. P.*, cantos 82-7 (tr. Pargiter, cantos 85-00, pp. 488-511).

[87] *Mār. P.*, 84.4-7 (tr. Pargiter, 87.4-7, p. 499):

Tataḥ kopaṁ cakāroccairaṁbikā tānarīnprati,
Kopena cāsyā vadanaṁ masīvarṇamabhūttadā. 4
Bhṛkuṭīkuṭilāttasyā lalāṭaphalakāddrutam,
Kālī karālavadanā viniṣkrāntāsipāśini. 5
Vicitrakhaṭvāṅgadharā naramālāvibhūṣnṇā,
Dvīpicarmaparīdhānā śuṣkamāṁsātibhariavā. 6
Ativistāravadanā jihvālalanabhīṣaṇā,
Nimagnā raktanayanā nādāpūritadiṅmukhā. 7

[88] *Ibid.*, 84.26 (tr. Pargiter, 87.25, p. 500):

Yasmāccaṇḍañca muṇḍañca gṛhītvā tvamupāgatā,
Cāmuṇḍeti tato loke khyātā devī bhaviṣyasi.

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[89] *Ibid.*, 85.11-3 (tr. Pargiter, 88.11-3, p. 502):
Etasminnantare bhūpa vināśāya suradviṣām,
Bhavāyāmarasiṁhānāmativīryabalānvitāḥ 11
Brahmeśaguhaviṣṇūnāṁ tathendrasya ca śaktayaḥ,
Śarīrebhyo viniṣkramya tadrūpaiścaṇḍikāṁ yayuḥ. 12
Yasya devasya yadrūpaṁ yathā bhūṣaṇavāhanam,
Tadvadeva hi tacchaktirasurānyoddhumāyayau. 13

[90] *Ibid.*, 85.14-21 (tr. Pargiter, 88.14-21, pp. 802-3):
Haṁsayuktavimānasthā sākṣasūtrakamaṇḍaluḥ,
Āyātā brahmaṇaḥ śaktirbrahmāṇī sābhidhīyate. 14
Māheśvari vṛṣārūḍhā triśūlavaradhāriṇī,
Mahāhivalayāprāptā candralekhāvibhuṣaṇā. 15
Kaumārī śaktihastā ca mayūravaravāhanā,
Yodhumabhyāyayau daityānambikā guharūpiṇī. 16
Tathaiva vaiṣṇavī śaktirgaruḍopari saṁsthitā,
Śaṅkhacakragadāśārṅgakhaḍgahastābhyupāpayau. 17
Yajñavārāhamatulaṁ rūpaṁ yā bibhrati hareḥ,
Śaktiḥ sāpyāyau tatra vārāhīṁ bibhratī tanum. 18
Nārasiṁhī nṛsiṁhasya bibhratī sadṛśaṁ vapuḥ,
Prāptā tatra saṭākṣepa kṣiptanakṣatrasaṁhatiḥ. 19
Vajrahastā tathaivaindrī gajarājoparisthitā,
Sahasranayanāprāptā yathāśakrastathaiva sā. 20
Tataḥ parivṛtastā bhirīśāno devaśaktibhiḥ,
Hanyatāmasurāḥ śīghraṁ mama prītyāha caṇḍikām. 21

[91] *Ibid.*, 85.22-7 (tr. Pargiter, 88.22-7. p. 503)- The varses 22 and 27 read as:
tato devīśarīrāttu viniṣkrāntātibhīṣaṇā,
Caṇḍikāśaktiratyugrā śivāśataninādinī. 22
……
Yato niyukto dūtyena tayā devyā śivaḥ svayam,
Śivadūtīti loke'sminstataḥ sā khyāti nāgatā. 27

[92] *Ibid.*, 85.29 ff. (tr. Pargiter, 88.29 ff., pp. 503-4).

[93] See, *e.g.*, *Ibid.*, 45.38 (tr. Pargiter, 88.38, p. 504);
Iti mātṛgaṇaṁ kruddhaṁ marddayantaṁ mahāsurān,
Dṛṣṭvābhyupāyairvividhairneśurdevarisainikāḥ. 38
Cf. also *Ibid.*, 85.44. 49 (tr. Pargiter, 88.44. 49, pp. 504-5).

[94] *Ibid.*, 85.39-55 (tr. Pargiter, 88.39-55, pp. 504-5).

A similar account of the Mātṛs, in which, however, the Mothers emanate from the body of the goddess Caṇḍikā herself, is given in the *Vāmana Purāṇa*, and, according to Agrawala, the entire episode of the Goddess killing the demons Śumbha, Niśumbha, *etc*., in this text seems to be indebted to the *Devi-māhātmya* version.[95] Also similar in essentials is the account of the *Varāha Purāṇa* with the difference that there the Mātṛs appear to aid Śiva against Andhakāsura.[96] As in the case of Raktavija in the *Devi-māhātmya*, from every drop of blood fallen from Andhakāsura's, body an identical demon emerged, and, to stop the blood from falling on the earth, Śiva created Yogeśvari out of the flame issuing from his mouth, and Indra and other gods also sent their *Saktis*. The latter are enumerated as Brahmāṇī, Māheśvari, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhi, Indrāṇi and Cāmuṇḍa, armed with weapons, wearing ornaments, riding *vahanās* and carrying banners like their respective male counterparts. By adding Yogeśvari to this group, the *Purāṇa* makes the number of the Mātṛkās eight. The Mothers caught the blood of the demon before it touched the ground and ultimately helped to break his power. According to the *Suprabhedāgama*, the Mātṛkās were created by Brahmā to kill Nirrta.[97]

~~*ORIGIN OF THE MĀTṚS*~~

The traditional origin of the Mātṛs as reflected in the Purāṇic myths, outlined above, is clearly an attempt to incorporate these deities into the brahmanical pantheon. The more or less stereotyped grouping, labelled Brāhmī, *etc*., is itself the first sign of the artificial nature of the so-called Sapta-or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās. It is difficult to account for the popularity of the Mātṛ cult on the basis of the shadowy figures "Energies" of certain brahmanical gods, especially if we keep in mind that not all the gods in the group can be imagined as having had a popular cult of their own. Most illuminating is the case of Brāhmi or Brahmāṇi. While almost invariably she heads the list of the Sapta- or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās, her male counterpart had scarcely a popular cult comparable to that of the Śiva or Viṣṇu. Perhaps an important god in northern India in the early Buddhist period, Brahmā, though always remembered as the father-god, is nevertheless an insignificant figure in the Purāṇic literature and there is no clear evidence of his popular independent cult.[98] Similarly, even if a Vārāhi is justified on the basis of a popular cult of the Varāha form of Viṣṇu, at least in the Gupta period,[99] the same cannot be said of Nārasiṁhī. Further, in literature and Art, Śiva's consort is generally recognizable, not as Māheśvarī, but the Umā, Pārvati or Gauri, and similarly the consort of Viṣṇu, generally speaking, is not Vaiṣṇavī but Śrī-Lakṣmi. Again, except in stories which narrate Kumāra Kārttikeya's marriage with Devasenā, this god is invariably remembered, not as one accompanied by his consort, but as a warrior god leading the god's armies, as the son of Śiva and Umā-Pārvatī, or, as often in South Indian art and literature, as an instructor god.[100] The inclusion of the *Śaktis* of one or more forms of Viṣṇu, besides that of Viṣṇu himself, also looks rather incongruous, and, perhaps for this reason, the *Devi-māhātmya*, when first introducing the god's "Energies," speaks only of the *Śaktis* of Brahmā, Śiva, Guha, Viṣṇu and Indra, without mentioning those of the other forms of Viṣṇu. An analysis of the Purāṇic myths of the origin of the Sapta- or Aṣṭa-mātṛikās, therefore, shows that the Mothers were essentially ferocious deities, always conceived of as a group, and any attempt to name them or fix their number was a result of brahmanising and incorporation in the Purāṇic pantheon.

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[95] See *Vām. P.*, chs. 29-30, esp. 30.3 ff ; Agrawala. *Vāmana Purāṇa—A Study*, pp. 105 ff.

[96] This account is summarised by Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. II, pp. 379 ff. In this *Purāṇa*, the Mātṛkās are also said to have been born out of Devī's laughter; see Yaduvanshi, *Śaiva Mata*, p. 119, quoting ch. 96 of the *Purāṇa*.

[97] See Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. II, pp. 382-3.

[98] See Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 510 ff.; Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 95-6; Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 464 ff.; *The Classical Age*, pp. 440 ff.

[99] See Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, pp. 422-3; Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa—A Study*, pp. 308 ff., esp. 333-5.

The above inference is confirmed by evidence which should be regarded, on logical as well as chronological considerations, prior to the above Purāṇic myths. In the *Matsya Purāṇa*, we are told that when an identical demon sprang up from every drop of Andhaka's blood, Śiva created the Mātṛs to drink all the blood and prevent the swelling of the demon army.[101] The Mothers were exceedingly gratified to perform this task even though it could be successfully accomplished only after Viṣṇu created Śuṣka-revatī. The *Purāṇa* names the Mothers in this story and makes up a list of about one hundred and ninety, with the remark that there were many others besides.[102] It does include Māheśvarī, Brāhmī, and Kaumārī in the very beginning, and later finds places for Śākrī, Cāmuṇḍa, Vārāhī, Nārasiṁhī and Vaiṣṇavī. Still, the list is too large to correspond to the standardised group of seven or eight Mothers. As far as the individual names are concerned, even this list may be suspected to be a fictitious one, and its bulk only impresses us as indicating that the Mothers were essentially conceived of as a group of goddesses of indefinite number. It is possible that the *Purāṇa*-writer, taking advantage of their collectivity and anonymity, has arbitrarily sought to include a large number of real and imaginary goddesses in the group. This is confirmed by another interesting observation in the story. Their task over, the Mothers continued to devour men, gods and demons in spite of Siva's admonition, and Nṛsiṁha-Viṇṣu had to create a different group of thirty-two Mothers to subdue them. These Mothers are also named,[103] with some names overlapping with the first list, and are contrasted with the latter by being characterized as "prosperous and fortunate."[104] They are supposed always to stay by Viṣṇu and receive oblations along with him, whereas, the subdued Mothers are instructed to grant all desires of the devotees when propitiated separately.[105]

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[100] Skanda's name *Kumāra* implies that he was essentially a bachelor god. In the *Vikramorvasīya*, Kālidāsa records the tradition that the sacred precincts of the god Kumāra Kārttikeya were strictly out-of-bounds for women. It is said that when Urvaśī, forgetting the rules laid down by the deity, entered the grove sacred to him, she was immediately transformed into a creeper; see *Vikramorvaśīya* (ed. Kale), Act IV, p. 182.

In respect of Kaumārī as one of the Sapta-mātṛkīs, it may also be noted that in the epic stories, the Matṛs are generally mothers of Skanda-Kumara.

[101] *Mat. P.*, ch. 179. The battle between Śiva and Andhaka is said to have taken place in the Mahākāla forest in the Avanti-viṣaya; see *Ibid.*, 179.5.

[102] *Ibid.*, 179.9-32. For the list of Mātṛs, see the Appendix.

[103] *Ibid.*, 179.66-73.

Perhaps a still earlier stage of the position of Mātṛs in the brahmanical pantheon is reflected in the *Mahābhārata*. As noted earlier, in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* of the text, the Mātṛs are conspicuously referred to and are specifically named at several places in the account of Skanda's birth.[106] Like the myth of Skanda's birth itself, the references to the Mātṛs in the context are singularly confused. Several independent groups seem to be referred to and differently named. Nevertheless, the citations do help us to imagine the original, essential nature of these deities.

The myth of the birth of Skanda in the *Mahābhārata* first introduces Indra rescuing Devasenā from the demon Keśin and Devasenā expressing the wish to be married to one who is able to conquer all the gods, demons, *etc.* Indra notices a favourable conjunction of planets and imagines that if a son were to be born then of Soma or Agni, he could become the appropriate husband for the damsel. He confers with Brahmā, who agrees with him, and the two gods then repair to the place of the seven celestial *ṛṣis* where the ground is prepared for the appearance of Agni's son. Agni, while returning from delivering the sacrificial oblations to the Devas, notices the wives of the brahmin *ṛṣis* and is smitten with their charms. Afraid to approach them with his illicit proposal of love, he decides to remain content with being near them in the form of the household fire. Svāhā the daughter of Dakṣa, who is already enamoured of the Fire-god, finds in the latter's infatuation an excellent opportunity to entice her beloved. Successively assuming the forms of the six wives of the brahmin seers, she unites with Agni, but every time deposits his seed on the peak of the White Mountain guarded by poisonous snakes, and abounding in Rākṣasas, Piśācas and other terrible spirits and animals.[107] From the seed thus thrown is born Skanda, with six faces, resplendent like the sun and of incalculable power.

Skanda rapidly grows into a mighty being, terrorising the three worlds, Such is the the fury and terror caused by his appearances that the gods first approach their leader Indra with the request to destroy him, and, finding him as afraid as they are, they finally

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104. *Sarvāstāstu mahābhāgā*; see *Ibid.*, 179.67. The Mothers created by Nṛsiṁha-Viṣṇu are given these epithets even though they are described as fierce enough to subdue the Śivaite mātṛkas and are called *trailokyasṛṣṭi-saṁhāra-samarthā*; *Ibid.*, 179.74.

105. *Ibid.*, 179.83-4. For further discussion on the long list of Mothers in this text, see below. It may be noted that the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, I, ch. 226, also gives the story of Śiva's killing the demon Andhakāsura with the aid of the Mātṛs in almost exactly the same words as the *Matsya Purāṇa*, ch. 179. As these Purāṇic stories specifically speak of a helpless Śiva seeking the aid of Viṣṇu, we may suspect the hand of a Viṣṇuite editor in this part of the myth. The *Kūrma Purāṇa* also has traces of the same tendency, where even Śiva is portrayed as joining the wayward Mothers in destroying everything, having been left without any means of subsistence; see Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. II, pp. 381-2.

106. *Mbh.*, III, chs. 213-21.

107. *Mbh.*, III. 214.11-2.

decide : "Let the Mothers of the Universe repair today to Skanda. They can muster at will any degree of energy. Let them kill this child."[108] Saying "It shall be so," the Mothers agree, but even they become dispirited at the sight of Skanda. They, therefore, seek the child's protection, praying to him to become their son, and, in return, Skanda is said to have paid due respect to them and acceded to their request.[109] We are told that Agni came to his son and stayed on the mountain with the Mother to tend him.[110] That lady among the Mothers, who was born of anger (*krodhasamudbhavā*) with a *śūla* in her hand, kept a constant watch over the child, and the other, the red-coloured daughter of the sea, "the cruel one, living on blood" (*krūrā lohitabhojanā*) nursed him.[111] At this place, there is no mention of the creation of the Mothers, or of their specific alliance to any brahmanical deities, and no attempt is made at naming them or fixing their number.

These *Mātaraḥ* continue to recur in the story of Skanda, but now other Mothers are also introduced, making any precise identification of the group difficult. While the Agni and numerous other "fire-mouthed" and blazing dwellers of heaven of cruel mien waited upon Skanda-Mahāsena with the Mātṛ-gaṇas,[112] Indra decided to fight it out with him but ultimately sought his protection, and the magnanimous babe granted him fearlessness. Here in a confused account, we are told that when once struck by Indra's *vajra*, another being came out of Skanda's body, called Viśākha, as also a number of *kumāras* and *kumārīs*, of terrific appearnce and stealers of childern, who adopted Viśākha as their father, and the latter, also called Bhadraśākha, guarded them carefully in the presence of the Mothers.[113] Then, "the daughters begotten by Hutāśana, named Tapa," went over to Skanda and expressed the wish to become "the good and respected Mothers of the world." Skanda, as we have seen earlier, granted this request, saying repeatedly, "Ye shall be divided into *Śivā* and *Aśivā*." Having established Skanda's sonship, the Mothers departed and, by the blessings of the same being, an offspring (*śiśu*) was born to them. These "Mothers of the śiśu are specifically named as Kākī, Halimā, Rudrā, Bṛhalī, Āryā, Palālā and Mitrā, and counted as a group of seven."[114] Who is this *śiśu* is uncertain. The following verses identify him as the eighth hero born of Skanda's Mothers, but it is said that "he is also known as the ninth when that being with the face of a goat is included."[115] Further, we are told, "know that the sixth face of Skanda was like that of a goat. That face...... is situated in the middle of the sixth and is regarded constantly by the Mātṛ-gaṇas.[116] We have clearly to do here with beings analogous to Skanda himself who probably merged together to form the conception of Skanda-Kārttikeya with different names; but interesting from our point of view is the curious group of the Mothers specifically named and counted as seven. How these Mothers, the "daughters of Hutāśana," are to be related to the Mothers tending the child Skanda, as narrated earlier in the story, is not made clear.

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[108] *Mbh*, III. 215.16:

Sarvāstvadyābhigacchantu skandaṁ lokasya mātaraḥ,
Kāmavīryā ghnantu cainaṁ tathetyuktvā ca tā yayuḥ.

[109] *Ibid.*, III. 215.17-9.

[110] *Ibid.*, III. 215.20:

...saha mātṛgaṇena ha.

[111] *Ibid.*, III. 215.21-2.

[112] *Ibid.*, III. 216.1-2:

Grahāḥ sopagrahāścaiva ṛṣayo mātarastathā,
Hutāśanamukhāścāpi dīptāḥ pāriṣadāṁ gaṇāḥ. 1
Ete cānye ca bahavo ghorāstridivavāsinaḥ,
Parivārya Mahāsenaṁ sthitā mātṛgaṇaiḥ saha. 2

[113] *Ibid.*, III. 216.13; 217.1-4.

[114] *Mbh.*, III. 217.6-9:

Yāstāstvajanayatkanyāstapo nāma hutāśanaḥ,
Kiṁ karomīti tāḥ skandaṁ samprāptāḥ samabhāṣata. 6

(Contd.)

The story goes on that with Skanda's concurrence, Indra continued to remain the sovereign of the three worlds, and in his turn anointed Shanda as the leader of the gods' army against the demons. Introduced now for the first time, Rudra is said to have come there with Pārvatī, and we are suddenly told of Skanda being in reality Rudra's son. It is explained that the White Mountain was actually form of Rudra's semen. Agni was united with the Kṛtikās on this mountain, and Rudra had entered into the constitution of the Fire-god when Skanda was produced.[117] Skanda is now married to Devasenā, "she who is called Ṣaṣṭhī, Lakṣmī, Āśā, Sukhapradā, Sinivāli, Kuhū, Sadvṛtti and Aparājitā."[118]

The six ladies, from amongst the wives of the seven *ṛṣis* now appear as another group of Mothers. Disowned by their respective husbands, who suspected them to have actually borne the child to Agni, they also come to the shelter of Skanda, who accepts them with the words "Be my Mothers."[119] The wives of the seers, like the seers

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(Contd.) *Mātara ucuḥ*:
Bhavema sarvalokasya vayaṁ mātara uttamāḥ,
Prasādāttava pūjyāśca priyametatkuruṣva naḥ. 7
Mārkaṇḍeya uvāca:
So'bravīdhāḍhamityevaṁ bhaviṣyadhvaṁ pṛthagvidhāḥ,
Aśivāśca śivāścaiva punaḥ punaṛudāradhīḥ. 8
Tataḥ saṁkalpya putratve skandaṁ mātṛgaṇo'gamat,
Kākī ca halimā caiva rudrātha bṛhalī tathā,
Āryā palālā vai mitrā saptaitāḥ śiśumātaraḥ. 9

115. *Ibid.*, III. 217.11.

116. *Ibid.*, III. 217.12:
...nityaṁ mātṛgaṇārcitam.

117. *Ibid.*, III. 218.25-30.

118. *Ibid.*, III. 218.47.

119. *Ibid.*, III. 219.1-6:
Mārkaṇḍeya uvāca:
Śriyā juṣṭaṁ mahāsenaṁ devasenāpatiṁ kṛtam,
Saptaṛṣipatnyaḥ ṣaḍ devyastatsakāśamathāgaman. 1
Ṛṣibhiḥ saṁparityaktā dharmayuktā mahāvratāḥ,
Drutamāgamya cocustā devasenāpatiṁ prabhum. 2
Vayaṁ putra parityaktā bhartṛbhirdevasaṁmitaiḥ,

(Contd.)

themselves, may have astral connections, but it is not specifically mentioned in this context,[120] and, earlier, only two of the *ṛṣis'* wives are named, one Śivā, the wife of Aṅgiras, whose form was first assumed by Svāhā, and the other, Arundhati, the wife of Vaśiṣṭha, whose form she could not assume on account of the latter's great ascetic merit and devotion to husband. However, some astral figures, including the Kṛttikās, are introduced in the story at this stage. It is said that Dhaniṣṭhā, *etc.*, including Rohiṇī, were created by Brahmā for specific astral positions, but Abhijit, jealous of the seniority of her sister, deserted her position to perform austerities. Indra, therefore, made a request to Skanda to fill up the vacancy, which seems to have been ultimately assigned to the *śakātākāra* Kṛttikās, presided over by Agni.[121] Vinatā's wish to become Skanda's mother is also inserted here.[122] However, when the story continues, we are told that all the Mothers (*sarvaḥ mātṛgaṇaḥ*) spoke to Skanda: "we have been praised by the learned as the Mothers of the world (*sarvasya lokasya mātaraḥ*), but we desire to be thy Mothers, and, on Skanda's agreeing to this, they go on to request that they be installed as Mothers in place of others of bygone age, that they, and not the old ones, be worshipped by the world, and that the progeny of which they had been deprived be restored to them.[123] They further add to this grim request others more formidable: "We desire

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(Contd.) *Akāranādruṣā tāta puṇyasthānātparicyutāḥ.* 3
Asmābhiḥ kila jātastvamiti kenāpyudāhṛtam,
Asatyametatsaṁśrutya tasmānnastrātumarhasi. 4
Akṣayaśca bhavetsvaṛgastvatprasādāddhi nah prabho,
Tvāṁ putraṁ cāpyabhīpsāmaḥ kṛtvaitadanṛṇo bhava. 5
Skanda uvāca:
Mātaro hi bhavatyo me suto vo'hamaninditāḥ,
Yaccābhīpsatha tatsarvaṁ saṁbhaviṣyati vastathā. 6

[120] For seers as stars, see Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 176 ff. Seers or *Ṛṣis* are sometimes conceived of as one with the Fathers in the epic; *Ibid.*, pp. 34 f., 176, 178; and the Fathers also are called stars; *Ibid.*, p. 34. These ideas seem to be anticipated in the Vedic thought where a certain relationship between the dead ancestors and stars is imagined; see below. The Saptaṛṣis in astronomy are understood as stars of the constellation of Ursa Major; see Monier-Williams, *SED*, p. 1150a, s.v. *Sapta.*

[121] *Mbh.*, III. 219.7-11. While Skanda makes these arrangements, none of the astral figures, singly or collectively, are specifically called *Mātaraḥ* or Mothers of Skanda, although their motherhood may be taken to be implied.

[122] *Ibid.*, III. 219.12.

[123] *Mbh.*, III. 219.14-7:
Mārkeṇḍaya uvāca:
Atha mātṛgaṇaḥ sarvaḥ skandaṁ vacanamabravīt,
Vayaṁ sarvasya lokasya mātaraḥ kavibhiḥ stutāḥ,
Icchāmo mātarastubhyaṁ bhavituṁ pujayasva naḥ. 14
Skanda uvāca :
Mātarastu bhavatyo me bhavatīnāmahaṁ sutaḥ,
Ucyatāṁ yanmayā kāryaṁ bhavatīnāmathepsitam. 15
Mātara ucuḥ :
Yāstu tā mātaraḥ pūrvaṁ lokasyāsya prakalpitāḥ,
Asmākaṁ tadbhavetsthānaṁ tāsāṁ caiva na tadbhavet. 16
Bhavema pūjyā lakasya na tāḥ pūjyāḥ suraṛṣabha,
Prajāsmākaṁ hṛtāstābhistvatkṛte tāḥ prayaccha naḥ. 17

(Contd.)

that living with thee and assuming different shapes, we be able to eat up the progeny of those Mothers and their guardians...".[124] Skanda, instead, assures them fresh progeny and, even though he exhorts them to exten their protective care to children instead of feeding on them, he still acquiesces to their afflicting them until the sixteenth year of their age.[125] The story finds this a convenient occasion to speak of beings, both male and female, called *grahas* or *Skanda-grahas*, who afflict children before and after birth in various ways. Some of the female beings included here are Vinatā, Rākṣasi, Pūtanā, both Aditi and Diti–the former also called Revatī –, Surabhī, Saramā, Kadrū, the mother of the Gandharvas and Apsarases and Āryā. They are specifically called evil spirits fond of meat and wine, and prescriptions are given as to how they may be pacified (*teṣāṁ praśamanaṁ kāryāṁ...*)[126] The whole context shows that the ogresses mentioned here are to be included in the group of the Mothers, and this is specified in the words :

Ye ca mātṛgaṇāḥ proktāḥ puraṣāścaiva ca ye grahāḥ,
Sarve skandagrahā nāma jñeyā nityaṁ śarīribhiḥ.[127]

The rest of the story of Skanda-Kārttikeya is taken up by the account of his destroying the army of the demons, especially one of its leaders, the Dānava Mahiṣa, but there is no talk of any assistance given by the Mothers to the gods in this fight, even though they may be presumed to have been present in Skanda's train.

SALYA-PARVAN EPIC

The Mātṛs appear equally prominently in another detailed story of Skanda, in the *Salya-parvan* of the epic,[128] where his parentage is specifically traced to Śiva and Umā,

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As noted earlier, it is not certain as to who precisely are referred to by *Sarvaḥ mātṛgaṇaḥ* in v. 14. The commentator Nīlakaṇṭha's identification of them as Vinatā, *etc.*, may or may not be correct. He is, however, certainly wrong in identifying the "Mothers of bygone age" with Brāhmī, *etc.*; see Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on *Mbh.*, III. 230. 14 hnd 16 in the Kinjawadekar's edn. of the epic. The concept of the Mātṛs is personified energies of gods is a later phenomenon; see below.

[124] *Mbh.*, III. 219. 19 :
Icchama tāsāṁ mātṛnāṁ prajā bhoktuṁ prayacchā nāḥ,
Tvayā saha pṛthagbhūtā ye ca tāsāmatheśvarāḥ.

[125] *Ibid.*, III. 219.50-3 :
Skanda uvāca :
Prajā vo dadmi kaṣṭaṁ tu bhavatībhirudāhṛtam,
Parirakṣatu bhadraṁ to prajāḥ sādhu namaskṛtāh. 20
Mātara ucuḥ :
Parirakṣāma bhadraṁ te prajāḥ skanda yathecchasi,
Tvayā no rocate skanda sahavāsaściraṁ prabho. 21
Skanda uvāca :
Yāvatṣoḍaśa varṣāṇi bhavanti taruṇāḥ prajāḥ,
Prabādhata manuṣpāṇāṁ tāvadrūpaiḥ pṛthagvidhaiḥ. 22
Ahaṁ ca vaḥ pradāsyāmi raudramātmānamavyayam,
Paramaṁ tena sahitā sukhaṁ vatsyatha pūjitāḥ. 23

[126] *Ibid.*, III. 219.24 ff.

[127] *Ibid.*, III. 219.42.

[128] *Mbh.*, IX, chs. 43-5.

and, in that context, also to the Kṛttikās. Called the story of the investiture of Kumāra, it speaks of the vital seed of Maheśvara falling into the blazing fire; or the Fire-god Agni, unable to hold it, throwing it into the Ganges; the sacred river, unable to retain it, throwing it on peak the of the Himalayas, where "Agni's son" began to grow and nurtured by the six Kṛittikās, developed six mouths and was called Kārttikeya.[129] When the child first saw his real father Śiva, the latter is described as seated among a crowd of Bhūtas who were bodiless, strange looking, crooked and ugly, with faces of wild beasts and birds.[130] The *Sapta-mātṛ-gaṇāḥ* were also present there,[131] as were the Sādhyas, Viśvedevas, Maruts, Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas, Siddhas, Dānavas, and Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Indra.[132] The mention of the Mothers in the company of Śiva is noteworthy, as also the motely crowd of strange beings with them. All the gods collected there request Brahmā to grant some kind of sovereignty to the child Skanda, and the latter's investiture as the general of the god's army is performed on the banks of the sacred Sarasvati.

The story provides a much fuller list of the brahmanical gods who were present on the auspicious occasion of the investiture of Kumāra, and all of them are said to have given suitable gifts to the young celebrity. Skanda in this way acquired not only various weapons of war but also numerous fighter-followers (*pāriṣadāḥ*), of fierce forms and strange animal faces, a long list of whose names is given.[133] Here, in continuation,[134] is introduce the band of Mothers (*mātṛ-gaṇāḥ*), "the slayers of foes," who become companions of Kumāra although they are not mentioned as anybody's gift to him.

A large number of these Mothers are actually named, in all about one hundred and ninety, but to make certain that the names are but a sampling of the group, we are told: "These and many other Mothers, numbering thousands and of diverse forms, became followers of Kārttikeya."[135] A graphic description of the gruesome appearance of these deities, their cruel fierce nature, their favourite haunts, *etc.*, follows the list."[136]

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[129] *Mbh.*, IX. 43.6-16. The *Rāmāyaṇa*. I. ch. 36, also gives the story of the birth of Skanda-Kumāra from Agni and Gaṅgā, of the child being nursed by the Kṛttikās, and thus developing six mouths and obtaining the name Kārttikeya, but the goddesses called Mātṛs do not play any part in the story.

[130] *Mbh.*, IX.43.23-8.

[131] *Ibid.*, IX.43.29 :

Saptamātṛgaṇāścaiva samājagmur viśāṁpate.

[132] *Ibid.*, IX.43.29-30.

[133] *Ibid.*, IX.44.73 ff.

[134] *Ibid.*, IX. ch. 45. The two opening verses of this chapter read :

Śṛṇu mātṛgaṇān rājan kumārānucaranimān,
Kīrtyamānānmayā vīra sapatnagaṇasūdanān. 1
Yaśasvinīnāṁ mātṛṇāṁ śṛṇu nāmāni bhārata,
Yābhirvyāptās trayo lokāḥ Kalyāṇībhiś carācarāḥ. 2

[135] *Ibid.*, IX.45.3-29. For the list of the Mātṛs, see the Appendix below. The verse 29 reads as :

Etāścānyāśca bahavo mātaro bharatarṣabha,
Kārttikeyānuyāyinyo nānārupāḥ sahasraśaḥ.

[136] *Ibid.*, IX.45.30 ff..

In the above list of the Mātṛs in the *Śalya-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, just as in that from the *Matsya Purāṇa* cited above, all kinds of goddesses are included. Here again we notice repetitions, and at least some names appear to be hypothetically constructed.[137] Clearly, any attempt at identification of goddesses in such lists has to be given up, but some names are noteworthy, either because they refer to goddesses of known history, like Bhadrakālī or Kālī,[138] or at least independently known elsewhere, or because they bring out some interesting aspect of the goddess cults, including the cult of the Mātṛs. Thus, in the epic list, a well-known demoness like Pūtanā is included.[139] Two goddesses of almost identical names, Catuṣpathaniketā[140] and Catuṣpatharatā,[141] with another called Catvaravāsinī,[142] remind us of the Mātṛ-rite at the crossroads in the Sanskrit dramas *Cārudatta* and *Mṛcchakaṭika*. There is also a goddess called Mahiṣānanā.[143]

In the further story, Skanda, accompanied by his companions and the Mothers, proceeds against the demons and destroys them, including their prominent leaders, Tāraka and Mahiṣa.

From these references to the Mothers in the epic stories, what inferences can we draw about the origin and essential nature of these deities? Since the incidental references in the non-didactic classical Sanskrit literature are to the Mātṛs as group divinities, and since this is corroborated by the evidence of inscriptions, this aspect of their nature must be accounted for. The Mātṛs undoubtedly loom large in the epic myths of Skanda-Kārttikeya, and that they were always conceived of as a group is also clear. But it seems equally clear that the *Mahābhārata* stories do not warrant any precise identification, nomenclature and fixed number of this group, in spite of actual attempts in the myths to the contrary.

We notice first that the Mothers are often introduced as a group without any names or fixed number. Such are the Mothers who are employed to kill the child Skanda and who eventually rear him. Similar are the two *Mātṛ-gaṇāḥ*, in the confused account of the epic, one of which requests to be installed in the place of the other. Despite a few who are named, such also appear to be the *Mātṛ-gaṇāḥ* who are presented as afflicters of children. The virtual anonymity of the group is also indicated by passages where individual members are specified or named. It is interesting to note that whenever, the epic attempts this, it lists a different group each time. On different occasions, in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* story, besides an anonymous group of Mothers, the daughters of Hutāśana—counted seven and named—, the wives of the brahmin seers, the Kṛttikās, and, curiously, it would appear, even the female beings produced out of

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[137] For an analysis of the two lists, see below.

[138] *Mbh.*, IX.45.11 and 13.

[139] *Ibid.*, IX.45.16. In the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* of the epic, the demoness Pūtanā is named as one of the female *bāla-grahas*, all of whom are included in the group called *Mātṛ-gaṇāḥ*. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the Mātṛs are named with Pūtanā, *etc.*, as evil beings; see below.

[140] *Ibid.*, IX.45.25.

[141] *Ibid.*, IX.45.27.

[142] *Ibid.*, IX.45.12.

[143] *Mbh.*, IX.45.25.

Skanda's own body,[144] are called *Mātṛs* or *Mātaraḥ*. The very long lists of the Mothers, as in the *Śalya-parvan* or the *Matsya Purāṇa*, are no exceptions to this, even though, on account of their bulk, they seem to form a class by themselves. Had the Mātṛs been well-known brahmanical divinities, with specific names and of more or less fixed number, we should never have found this variety and confusion in their epic lists. The only manner in which the Mothers in the myths of Skanda in the *Mahābhārata* can be made intelligible is by supposing that they were a group of popular divinities, influential but as yet outside the pale of brahmanical society, and, in the process of brahmanisation, their essentially alien nature and, partly for that reason, their relative anonymity was utilized to introduce all kinds and groups of goddesses under their name. At least as far as the epic myths are concerned, we are not dealing with a gradual evolution but with haphazard and arbitrary attempts at absorption and brahmanisation. The epic sources do not seem to warrant the priority of a specific group, such as the Kṛttikās or any other, from which other specific or general *Mātṛ-gaṇas* may be supposed to be derived. The original and essential aspect of the Mātṛs seems to be a group of goddesses, allied and alike in nature, who were given different names and numbers at different times. No other explanation would do justice to the *Mahābhārata* evidence.[145]

The longer lists of the Mātṛs in the *Śalya-parvan* and the *Matsya Purāṇa*[146] are, as suggested above, a class by themselves, and a closer look at these may be attempted here.[147] Neither the names in the lists nor anything in the context where they are introduced have any suggestion of originality. But what is interesting is that, unlike attempts to produce shorter and more compact lists of the Mātṛs, these long ones, incongruous though it may seem, do not even have pretensions to specifying and identifying these deities. This becomes obvious when the compiler ends his list with the phrase "and many others besides" (*etāścānyāśca bahavo,*[148] *etāścānyāśca*[149])—the *Śalya parvan* has additional "thousands of them" (*sahasraśaḥ*)[150]—but the very length of the lists and the analysis of the names contained in them confirm their artificial character.

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[144] This conclusion is irresistable because the *Āraṇyaka-parvan*, in ch. 217, vv. 1-2, introduces terrific *Kumārakas* born from Skanda's body who are stealers of children, and *Kanyās* of great strength, and in ch. 219, v. 30, portrays these *Kumāras* and *Kumārīs* as *bāla-grahas* and counts them along with the Mātṛs.

[145] See below, for an examination of various suggestions about the orign of the Mātṛs.

[146] *Mbh.*, IX.45.1 ff. ; *Mat. P.*, ch. 179. See also Appendix, below.

[147] We are omitting from consideration the list in the *Viṣṇudharmattara Purāṇa*, ch. 226, because the exactly parallel list in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, ch. 179, is a more complete one. According to Hazra, the *Matsya Purāṇa* has borrowed a large number of passages from the *Viṣṇudharmottara*; see Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, vol. I, pp. 202 ff.. If this is true, it is possible that the list of Mātṛs given in the former text is also based on that in the latter. But the available text of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* omits a few names and produces a somewhat shorter list of the Mothers. Thus, even though, *Viṣṇudharmottara*, I.226.28a is an extra line not found in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, *Matsya Purāṇa*, 179.31 and 32a are missing in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*. Again, although *Viṣṇudharmottara*, I.226.63b-64a. proceeds to list, like *Matsya Purāṇa*, 179.66, the 32 Mothers created by Nṛsiṁha, it produces a list of 24 only, omitting a complete verse after I.226.66a, which is available in *Matsya Purāṇa*, 179.69b-70a (*cf.* also Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, vol. I, pp. 155-6, fn. 122 f.). This consideration alone justifies the choice of the *Matsya Purāṇa* list for a fuller discussion, but some of the proper names in it may also be more original compared to those preserved in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*. Unfortunately, this cannot be asserted with any confidence, in the absence of critical editions of the two texts and in view of the fact that many names in the list may be arbitrarily constructed, making it impossible to distinguish between the original and corrupt forms.

In each of the two lists, in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Matsya Purāṇa*,[151] the goddesses number about one hundred and ninety, but, curiously, there are hardly more than a dozen common names. Balā, Lambā, Nandinī, Subhagā and Viśokā, are the only names which appear in the same form in the two lists. It may also be accepted that Bahuputrikā, Bhaganandā, Gokarṇī, Kālikā, Krodhanā, Kukkuṭikā and Śaṅkhanikā of the epic refer to the same goddesses respectively as Bahuputrī, Bhagānandā, Gokarṇikā, Krodhanī, Kukkuṭī and Śaṅkhinī in the *Matsya Purāṇa.* But this almost exhausts the common names. Again, we come across repetitions of names in each of the two lists as also names which have the appearance of being artificially constructed for real or imaginary goddesses. Surprisingly, these features are relatively more in evidence in the *Mahābhārata* list, which has otherwise, every claim to being chronologically earlier. Thus, in the epic, Gokarṇī Lohamekhalā, Lohitākṣī, Mahābalā, Piṅgākṣī and Sudāmā are each listed twice, and clusters of names like Dahadahā and Dhamadhamā,[152] Eḍī, Bheḍī and Sameḍī,[153] Gaṇā and Sugaṇā,[154] Sudāmā and Vasudāmā,[155] Pratiṣṭhā and Supratiṣṭhā,[156] Megharavā and Meghamālā,[157] and several goddesses with names ending in *dā* and *karṇī*,[158] by their very grouping, look artificial. Instances of arbitrary names can be detected also in the *Matsya Purāṇa* list in such pairs as Śatānandā and Bhagānandā,[159] Mātṛnandā and Sunandā,[160] Subhagā and Durbhagā,[161] Kampinī and Parikampinī,[162] Lambasaṭā and Visaṭā,[163] *etc.* Individual groups of such names might well have been conceived as names of real goddesses, mutually distinguished,[164] but the manner in which they appear in the lists along with similar groups, and the general nature of the lists themselves, make their authenticity highly suspect.

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[148] *Mbh.*, IX.45.29.

[149] *Mat. P.*, 179.32.

[150] *Mbh.*, IX.45.29.

[151] See the Appendix below, where the names in the two lists are alphabetically arranged for convenience of reference.

[152] *Mbh.*, IX.45.19.

[153] *Ibid.*, IX.45.13.

[154] *Ibid.*, IX.45.26.

[155] *Ibid.*, IX 45.5. In *ibid.*, v. 10, Sudāmā is named with Bahudāmā.

[156] *Ibid.*, IX.45.28.

[157] *Ibid.*, There is a Meghasvanā in *ibid.*, v. 8, and Meghavāsinī in v. 17.

[158] Dhanadā and Bhavadā in *ibid.*, IX.45.13; Bhaṅgadā in v. 26; Paśudā, Vittadā, Sukhadā, Payodā, Go-mahiṣadā, all in v. 27; Kṛṣṇakarṇī, Kṣurakarṇī and Catuṣkarṇī in v. 24; Gokarṇī, Kharakarṇī. and Mahākarṇī in v. 25; Gokarṇī again with Sukarṇī in v. 28.

[159] *Mat. P.*, 179.11.

[160] *Ibid.*, 169.12.

[161] *Ibid.*, 179.14. *Dubhargā* of the text is abviously a mistake; cf. *Vis. Dh. P.*, I.226.12.

[162] *Ibid.*, 179.24; *Ibid.*, v. 25 names Kampanā.

[163] *Ibid.*, 179.28.

[164] *Cf.* Culakokā and Mahākokā-devatā of the Bharhut railing inscriptions; see Barua and Sinha, *Bharhut Inscriptions*, p. 73.

The suspicion that the lists of the Mātṛs in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Matsya Purāṇa* are artificial is strengthened by two more factors. Firstly, they include with what appear to be imaginary names, names of goddesses of known history. Such are the goddesses Bhadrakālī, Kālī, Kālikā or Mahākālī, who in one form or the other appear in both the lists.[165] Bahuputrikā, Koṭarā, Revatī and Jyeṣṭhā also appear to have had popular cults of their own.[166] Secondly, in these lists goddesses whose divine nature was never suspect in the brahmanical tradition are crowded together with demonesses. This is difficult to be detected in the epic list in which, while the well-known demoness Pūtanā is included and several other names suggest goddesses of horrible form and character, there are scarcely any clearly recognizable Vedic brahmanical deities. But the *Matsya Purāṇa* includes Aditi, Uṣā, Svahā, Svadhā, Vaṣaṭkārā, *etc.*, with Piśācī, Rākṣasī, Vinatā, Surasā, Danu, *etc.* This might possibly hint at the priority of the *Mahābhārata* list, but such priority is clearly indicated by the fact that, whereas, there are very few goddesses in it whose names may be imagined as feminine forms of names of male gods,[167] the list in the *Matsya Purāṇa* is full of such instances. There, not only all the traditional Sapta-mātṛkās are recognizable, but also such goddesses as Rudreśī, Śākrī, Śāṅkarī, Saury, Śivā, Vaināyakī, Vāruṇī and Vāyavyā.[168]

The long lists of the Mātṛs, therefore, generally speaking, are purely arbitrary compilations and no precise identification of all the goddesses named can be made.

It might perhaps be suspected for a moment, in view of these long lists, that we are dealing not with one group of the Mātṛs but with several separate groups of them, or that the very grouping of the Mātṛs is a later phenomenon when popular local

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165. Bhadrakālī in *Mbh.*, IX.45.11; Kālikā in *Ibid.*, v, 13; Kālī in *Mat. P.*, 179.14 and 27 and Mahākālī in *Ibid.* v. 14.

166. Bahuputrikā occurs in *Mbh..* IX.45.3 and *Mat. P.*, 179.19. The *Kādambarī* refers to painting the figures of this goddess on the door of the confinement room of queen Vilāsavatī; see *Kadambarī*, ed. Parab, p. 159. A *Jātamātṛdevatā* is mentioned in the *Harṣacarita* (ed. Kane, 4th Ucchvāsa, p. 7), in connection with the celebration on the occasion of Harṣa's birth, and it would appear from Śaṁkara's commentary on it (see *Ibid.*, ed. Führer, p. 185) that she might be identical with Bahuputrikā. See also Agrawala, *Harṣacarita- Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 65, and *Kādambarī-Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 77 and fn. 2, where the identification of these goddesses with Carcikā is suggested. See also above, Ch. I.

    Koṭarā occurs in the *Mahābhārata*, IX.45.17. For a popular cult of Koṭavī-Koṭarī-Koṭarā, see below, Ch. V.

    The *Matsya Purāṇa* includes Revatī and Jyeṣṭhā also in the list of the Mātṛs; see *Mat. P.*, 179.13, 20. A popular cult of Revatī is clearly suggested in the *Revatī-kalpādhyāya* of the *Kāśyapa Saṁhitā*; See *Kāśyapa saṁhitā*, pp. 187 ff.; also Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratiya Lokadharma*, pp. 58 ff.; see also above, Ch. I. For a popular cult of Jyeṣṭhā, see Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. II pp. 390 ff.; Hartmann, *Beitrage zur Geschichte der Gottin Lakṣmī*, pp. 12 ff., esp. 15-6; Banerjea, J.N., "Some Folk Goddesses of Ancient and Mediaeval India," *IQH*, XIV, pp. 104 ff..

167. In fact, there are no such recognizable names except the very doubtful ones like Dhanadā, Piṅgākṣī, Pūṣaṇā, and probably a few others.

168. See Appendix, below.

goddesses of independent origin and history were arbitrarily huddled together.[169] The second alternative, which at first sight would appear to explain the long lists satisfactorily, has to be rejected outright because independent historical evidence invariably speaks of the existence and worship of the Mātṛs as group-divinities, which, therefore, has to be accepted as their original, essential characteristic.[170] The first alternative may appear relatively less objectionable, especially since the epic, when referring to the Mātṛs, occasionally uses the expression *mātṛ-gaṇāḥ*.[171] But even this explanation would appear hypothetical, firstly because the more common expression in the epic passages is *mātaraḥ*, and occasionally also *mātṛ-gaṇāḥ*, where not more than one group is implied; and, secondly, because the classical Sanskrit literature of secular inspiration as well as inscriptions, when referring to the shrines or the worship of the Mātṛs, always seem to mention them as one group. So the longer lists also should be regarded as products of the same tendency which worked in the compilation of shorter and more specific lists, with the difference that the compilers here show greater enthusiasm and, commensurate with it, greater arbitrariness in including all kinds of real and imaginary goddesses in the group. At least in the early stages of such developments, as reflected in the epic verses and also in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, the compilation of longer lists may also be assumed to have been influenced by the exigencies of the myth, to highlight Skanda's position by increasing the number of Mātṛs accompanying him, or, when the destruction of demons was at stake, to swell the gods' army by including as many ferocious Mothers in it as possible, counting them in hundreds and thousands. It is only when a smaller group, like that of the Sapta-Mātṛkās, has been more or less standardised and popularised in the brahmanical tradition that, in the Purāṇic myths, we notice only these assisting Śiva or Devī in vanquishing the demon host. The word *Mātṛ-gaṇāḥ*, therefore, has to be understood as a loose expression synonymous with *Mātaraḥ*,[172] and perhaps occasionally necessitated because several arbitrary groups of Mothers had already been introduced into the story.

The arbitrary nature of the long lists of the Mātṛs in the epic and Purāṇic literature has been demonstrated above. The manner in which such lists were made up and the factors facilitating their compilation may also be suggested here. The possible exigencies of the story where a large army of ferocious beings was to be brought together, and the ease with which this could be done in the case of the Mātṛs in view of their group nature and relative anonymity, coupled with the enthusiasm of the compilers, must have worked in the production of such lists, but we suspect that these factors alone may not fully explain their bulky nature, for we notice in them, not simply a vague and general counting of deities in round figures like hundreds and thousands, but attempts at actually naming such a large number. In the face of these lists, therefore, it appears to us necessary to assume that, even if the names included are generally concocted ones, a wide spread cult of feminine deities must have been a familiar phenomenon of the age. Real goddesses must have been locally worshipped all over India before such lists could be manufactured and made intelligible. This, incidentally, is supported by certain passages in the same context in the *Mahābhārata*. Towards the close of a fairly detailed description of the nature and appearance of the Mātṛs, immediately following the list of them, we are informed: "Adorned with diverse kinds of ornaments, they wear diverse kinds of attire, and speak diverse languages."[173] It is transparent enough that the compiler of the epic list (and presumably that of the *Matsya Purāṇa*, following it) had raw material in the form of the very large number of local goddesses to draw upon in reconstructing a group of Mothers in hundreds, and in actually being encouraged to coin names for them. However, while the intention of the compiler and the method adopted by him is clear, his attempt has no other relevance to the concept of the Mātṛs except demonstrating the group nature of these deities and their alien origin. As far as the mechanism of coining names is concerned, it may be noted that almost all the names appear to be pure Sanskrit words in feminine forms. A fairly large number of them are expressive of the forms and appearance of the Mātṛs, generally fierce and cruel, *e.g.*, Bhayaṁkarī, Uttejanī, Śatruñjayā, Krodhanā; Mahāvegā, Vibhīṣaṇā, Alātākṣi, Lohitākṣī, Dīrghajihvā, Vidyujjihvā, Lambapayodharā, Śaśolūkamukhī, Śiśumāramukhī, Jarjarādanā, Lohamekhalā, Khaṇḍakhaṇḍā, Mahākāyā, *etc.* Other names try to express the sentiment that, when appeased, the Mātṛs grant all kinds of boons; such as Paśudā, Vittadā, Sukhadā, Payodā, Go-mahiṣa-dā, *etc.* Some names appear to be euphemistically formed with *ānanda* and *bhaga* endings, imputing a general auspicious nature to these deities.[174]

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[169] This would seem to be implied in Kosambi's approach; see below.

[170] The smaller groups of the Mothers, widely differing from each other, as seen in the myths of Skanda's birth in the *Mahābhārata*, would be intelligible only on the assumption of a pre-existing group of popular goddesses who were collectively designated Mātṛs.

[171] E.g. in *Mbh.*, III.219.42 : *ye ca mātṛgaṇāḥ proktāḥ* ...; *mātṛgaṇān* in *Ibid.*, IX.45.1. Also in *Ete cānye ca bahavo gaṇāḥ śatrubhayaṁkarāḥ* (*Ibid.*, IX.45.40), the word *gaṇāḥ*, coming immeniately after the long list of the Mothers and the description of their forms and nature, should stand for *Mātṛgaṇāḥ*.

[172] This inference would be quite in conformity with the Sanskrit grammatical tradition, in which, in the case of a *dvigu* compound, the qualified noun could be in the plural if the adjective part indicated more than one number, *i.e.*, *Sarvaḥ mātṛgaṇaḥ* and *Sarvāḥ mātṛgaṇāḥ*, would both be permissible and means the same, *viz.*, "the group of the Mothers." A good illustration is provided by *Saptamātṛgaṇāścaiva* in *Mbh.*, IX. 43.29, which almost certainly stands for the group of the seven Mothers.

Before we proceed to examine attempts to specify the names and number of the Mātṛs in shorter, compact groups of seven, eight, *etc.*, we may take note of the epic and Purāṇic statements about the nature of these deities.

Far from what their group name, "Mothers," seems to suggest, the Mātṛs generally appear as a formidable group of fighting, ferocious and bloodthirsty beings. This is indicated by several aspects of their character and myths. In the common epic

[173] *Mbh.*, IX. 45.39:

Nānābharaṇadhāriṇyo nānāmālyāmbarāstathā,
Nānāvicitraveṣāśca nānābhāṣāstathaiva ca.

[174] For several such names, see *Mbh.*, IX. 45. 5, 11; *Mat.P.* 179. 11, 12, 14, 25: Cf. also Maṅgalā and Sumaṅgalā in *Mat.P.*, 179. 21 and *Mbh.*,IX. 45. 12 respectively; Kalyāṇī in *Mbh.*, IX. 45.7 and Svastimatī in *ibid.*, IX. 45. 12; Śubhā in *Mat.P.*, 179.29

and Purāṇic stories of Śiva, Skanda or Devī killing the demons, they appear on the side of the gods as suitable matches for their enemies. Their appearance strikes terror in their enemies' hearts and they spread destruction all around the demon host.[175] In the Purāṇic myths of Śiva killing Andhakāsura, as we have seen, the Mātṛs were especially created to suck the blood of the wounded demon and were exceedingly gratified at performing this task.[176] In fact, so pronounced is their ingrained ferocity and bloodthirstiness that even after the demons are annihilated, they continue to devour gods and men in the three realms in spite of Śiva's admonition to the contrary.[177]

Although designated "Mothers," the Mātṛs also appear as ogresses. It must be borne in mind that the so-called "Mothers" of the child Skanda were initially employed to kill him. Skanda's female *grahas*, again called Mātṛs, are said to destroy foetuses, cause miscarriage and afflict children under sixteen years of age in various harmful ways.[178] In fact, they have to be especially pacified to prevent them from doing so. It may be added here that both the *Harivaṁśa* and the *Matsya Purāṇa* record a tradition that all the children of the king Bharata had been destroyed in a bygone age on account of the anger of the Mātṛs.[179]

The malevolent character of the Mātṛs is clearly indicated in a graphic description of their forms and appearance in the *Śalya-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*.[180] Though also said to be generally of straight forms and sweet features, fair complexioned, endowed with youth and decked with ornaments, they are described at length as ugly, ferocious-looking beings, with long nails, long teeth and protruding lips. They are skeletal (*nirmāṁsagātryaḥ*) and some of them have long ears, long breasts and stomachs. While some are said to be white in colour, others are tawny, coppery, green or dark like clouds and smoke. Their favourite haunts are trees, open spots, crossroads, caves and cremation grounds, mountains and springs,[181] all of which, named together, have to be regarded as equally inauspicious places, and were often conceived as playgrounds of all kinds of demoniacal beings like Rākṣasas, Piśācas, Bhūtas, *etc.*[182] Cārudatta's worship of the Mātṛs as referred to in the *Cārudatta* and the *Mṛcchakaṭika* may have been a brahmanised rite, but it is interesting to note that the offerings were to be made in the evening at the crossroads, and the used or abandoned Mātṛ shrines of the *Harṣacarita* and *Kādambarī*, ofted located in uninhabited or wild places, are clearly not an invention of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. The statement in the *Harṣacarita* that young nobles burnt themselves with lamps to propitiate the Mothers must also be accepted as having some basis in fact, for even more gory rituals are recorded in the *Yaśastilaka* of Somadeva, according to which certain fanatical devotees of the Mātṛs used to tear out their intestines to appease these deities.[183]

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[175] Notes their performance in *Māt.P.*, 85. 28-38 (tr. Pargiter, 88. 28-38. pp. 503-4); see also Mātṛs as *śatrubhayaṁkarāḥ* in *Mbh.*, IX. 45.40. In *Bhā.P.*, VIII. 10.33, the Mātṛs fight the demons for gods for possession of *āmṛta* that came out of the churning of the ocean, and in *ibid.*, X. 63. ff., they are in the train of Śiva when he fights on the side of Bāṇāsura against Kṛṣṇa's army.

[176] *Mat.P.*, 179. 33 reads as:

Andhakānāṁ mahāghorāḥ papustadrudhiraṁ tadā,
Tato'ndhakāsṛjaḥ sarvāḥ parāṁ tṛptimupāgatāḥ,

In the *Mār.P.*, against Raktavīja, this feat is performed by Kālī-Cāmuṇḍā, generally counted as the last of the Sapta-mātṛkās. See also Lohitabhojanā as the name of a "Mother" attending on the child Skanda, and some Bāla-grahas, also called Mātṛ-gaṇāḥ, as fond of flesh and wine.

[177] *Mat.P.*, 179. 41-4, 61-2.

[178] *Mbh.*, III. 219. 24-41.

[179] *Hv.*, 23.50:

Bharatasya vinaṣṭeṣu tanayeṣu mahīpate,
Mātṛṇāṁ tāta kopena yathā te kathitaṁ tadā.

Mat. P., 49. 15:

Bharatasya vinaṣṭeṣu tanayeṣu purā kila,
Putrāṇāṁ mātṛkātkopāt sumahānsaṁkṣayaḥ kṛtaḥ.

[180] *Mbh.*, IX. 45. 30-40.

[181] *Ibid.*, IX. 45. 38;

Vṛkṣacatvaravāsīnyaś catuṣpathaniketanāḥ,
Guhāśmaśānavāsinyaḥ śailaprasravaṇālayāḥ.

The demoniacal strain in the Mātṛs' character is also suggested by the arbitrarily compiled long lists of the epic and the *Purāṇas* which, as we have seen, juxtapose goddesses with known demonesses.[184] But clearer evidence still comes from several instances where the Mātṛs as a group are counted along with beings of undoubtedly demoniacal character. We have already seen how, in the *Śalya-parvan*, when the father Rudra was seen by the babe Kumāra Kārttikeya, the former was in the midst of numerous ferocious and ugly looking Bhūtas and the Divine Mothers, *etc.* The list includes towards the end several Vedic brahmanical deities, but it starts with counting the Bhūtas and immediately after them notices the Mothers. Several such interesting instances are found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.* For example, in an account of the creation of all beings by Viṣṇu, we are told of the origin of the Prajāpatis, Manus, Devas, Ṛṣis, Pitṛ-gaṇas, Siddhas, Cāraṇas, Gandharvas, Vidyādharas, Asuras, Guhyakas, Kinnaras, Apsarases, Nāgas, Sarpas, Uragas, "Mātṛs," Rākṣasas, Piśācas, Pretas, Bhūtas, Vināyakas, Kūṣmāṇḍas, Unmād-devatās, Yātudhānas, Grahas, *etc.*, where the specific position of the Mothers in the narrative cannot be overlooked.[185] In the description of Kṛṣṇa's victory over Bāṇa to secure the release of Aniruddha, Rudra is portrayed as fighting on the side of the demon king and his army is said to have been constituted of Bhūtas, Pramathas, Guhyakas, Ḍākinis, Yātudhānas, Vetālas, Vināyakas, Pretas, "Mātṛs", Piśācas, Kūṣmāṇḍas and Brahma-rākṣāsas.[186] At another place in the same *Purāṇa*, the Mātṛs are explicitly conceived of as evil beings. We are told that when the babe Kṛṣṇa had killed the *bālaghātinī* Pūtanā, the overjoyed, but at the same time scared, Gopīs carried out all kinds of apotropaic ritual for the child and finally performed a *bīja-nyāsa* on his body with various protective utterances, including : "…. May the Dākinīs, the Jaṭādhārīs, the Kūṣmāṇḍas, the infanticides, the goblins, the Mātṛs, the Piśācas, the Yakṣas, the Rākṣasas, the Vināyakas, Koṭarā, Revatī, Jyeṣṭhā, Pūtanā, *etc.*, …, other evil omens and calamities dreamt of, the slayers of the old and the young, all these and other evil spirits be destroyed, being terrified at the recital of the name of Viṣṇu."[187]

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[182] See *e.g.*, Hopkins, *EM*, p. 37 for Bhūtas as dangerous demons of mountains; *ibid.*, pp. 39, 40, 44 for Rākṣasas living in caves, trees, mountain wilds, rough places. The demoness Jarā is said to collect raw flesh at crossroads at night; see *ibid.*, p. 41. According to Varāhamihira, a house situated near the crossroads brings evil repute; see *Bṛhatṣaṁhitā*; 52.87.

[183] *Kvacit-tīkṣṇa-Puruṣāpakṛṣṭa-svakīyāntra-yantradolana-toṣyamāṇa-mātṛmaṇḍalam*, as cited in Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian culture*, p. 397. The dreaded goddess Caṇḍamārī is described in the *Yaśastilaka* as the stewardess of the kitchen of the awful Mothers; see *ibid.*, p. 81.

[184] Kākī. who is called a Mātṛ in *Mbh.*, III. 217.9 is a demoness (*dānavī* in *Hv.*, 3.81-2.

[185] *Bhā.P.*, II. 10.37-9. In a similar description of the creation of all beings by Viṣṇu in the Kinjawadekar's edn. of the *Mahābhārata*, we are told of the origin of *Bhūta-mātṛ-gaṇādhyakṣam virūpākṣam* (see *Mbh.*, ed. Kinjawadekar, XII. 207.34), but the Critical edn. rejects the verse as apocryphal; see *Mbh.*, Cr. edn., vol. 15, p. 1116, n. 545 on XII. 200.33.

[186] *Ibid.*, X. 63.6 ff., esp vs. 10-1.

There is, therefore, no doubt the essentially evil nature of the Mātṛs, and it would appear that even after they had been incorporated into the brahmanical pantheon and their cult popularised in the form of the Sapta—or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās. their original nature was never forgotten. The need of pacification (*praśamana*) Mātṛs, as referred to in the *Mahābhārata*, appears to have been constantly felt. In the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, immediately after the account of Śiva's destruction of the demon Andhakāsura with the aid of the Mothers, a short chapter is devoted entirely to certain rites, involving the use of many kinds of medicinal herbs, food materials, *etc.*, by which the evil influence of the Mātṛs (*mātṛ-doṣa*) may be warded off.[188] It is interesting to note that in the rite of the *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* as described in the mediaeval digests and the *Purāṇas*, the rationale given for the worship of the Mātṛs, before that of the Pitṛs or other deities is that otherwise, they would perpetrate violence,[189] and Viṣṇu occasionally appears in the role of the chastiser of these divinities.[190] In the *Varāha Purāṇa*, the Mātṛkās are portrayed as symbolizing had mental qualities like desire, anger, covetousness, pride, *etc.*[191]

The character of the Mātṛs is reflected also in the epigraphs. In its invocatory verse, as we have seen, the Deogarh Rock inscription of Svāmibhaṭa lays stress on the prowess of these deties, and in the Gaṅgdhār inscription, while the Mātṛs are described as "uttering loud and tremendous shouts of joy and stirring up the very oceans with the mighty winds arising from the Tantric rites of their religion," their abode is said to be "full of female ghouls" (*ḍākinī-saṁprakīrṇṇam*) and "a very terrible one" (*atyuggraṁ*).[192] As we shall presently see below, there are other indications that

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187. *Ibid.*, X. ch. 6. The verses 27-9 read :
Ḍākinyo yātudhānyaśca kūṣmāṇḍā ye'rbhakagrahāḥ,
Bhūtapretapiśācāśca yakṣarakṣovināyakāḥ, 27
Koṭarārevatījyeṣṭhā pūtanā mātṛkādayaḥ,
Unmādā ye hyapasmārā dehaprāṇendriyadruhaḥ. 28
Svapnadṛṣṭā mahotpātā vṛddhabālagrahāśca ye,
Sarve naśyantu te viṣṇornāmagrahaṇabhīravaḥ. 29
188. *Viś.,Dh.P.*, I. ch. 227.
189. See Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, p. 39, fn. 84,
190. *Mat.P.*, ch. 179.
191. See **R**ao, *EHI*, I, pt. II, 381.
192. See Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 76, lines 35-7 of the record:
Mātṛṇāñca [pramu] dita-ghan-ātyarttha-nihrādinīnām,
Tantr-ōdbhūta-Prabala-pavan-odvarttit-āmbhonidhīnām.

(Contd.)

certain forms of worshipping the Mātṛs were probably of the Tantric variety, and there is explict, though late, evidence of these deities being actually included in proper Tantric rites. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the Mātṛs, like many other similar groups such as Ḍākinīs, Śākinīs, Yoginīs, *etc.*, who are all of predominently malevolent character, were included in the Tantric rites, and possibly were the very first to be included, for that very reason.

The essentially demonical character of the Mātṛs appears certain, and their group name should, therefore, be regarded as euphemistic. The whole history of the Mothers appears analogous to that of the demones Hāritī who became the Buddhist Madonna,[193] or the demoness Jarā of the *Mahābhārata*.[194] Of course, the dual character of a divine figure, at once evil and good, is a familiar religious phenomenon. Some of the best instance of it are provided in the religious history of India itself, in which, generally speaking, it becomes difficult to conceive of a demon, as wholly evil, or, for that matter, of a god as always kind and merciful.[195] It is possible to imagine that the Mātṛs too had always had such an ambivalent nature; essentially cruel, they could also be pacified so as to grant protection and boons or, at least, not to inflict injuries. But as far as the evidence of the brahmanical literature stands, the Mātṛs seem to have acquired much of their kindly nature, their so-called "Motherhood," in the process of their entry into the brahmanical pantheon. To our mind, the epic passages where, while accepting the seven daughters of Hutāśana as "Mothers," Skanda repeatedly remarks: "Ye shall always be named *Śivā* and *Aśivā*," and where, dissuading the *Mātṛs* from eating human children, he exhorts them to extend to the children their protective care,[196] and also a similar act on the part of Śiva in the *Matsya Purāṇa*,[197] retain pages of the real history of these divinities, when their malevolent character was gradually being softend in the process of their brahmanisation.[198]

The analysis of the epic and Purāṇic myths, therefore, enables us to suggest that the Mātṛs were originally a group of analogous goddesses of cruel, demoniacal aspect,

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[. . . .] gatam-idaṁ ḍākinī-saṁprakīrṇṇam,
Veśm-ātyuggraṁ nṛpati-sacivo=['] kārayat=Puṇya-hētōḥ.

See also Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, II, p. 405.

193. See Peri, Noel, "Hārītī, la Mère-de-démons," *BEFEO*, XVII, no. 3, 1917, pp. 1 ff.; also Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas* I, pp. 9-10, and II, pp. 5-6 and references cited there.
194. See *Mbh.*, II. 16.38 ff.; 17.1 ff.;also Hopkins, *EM*, p. 41; Benerjea, "Some Folk Goddesses of and Ancient Mediaeval India," *IHQ*, XIV, pp. 101-4.
195. Cf. Hopkins, *EM*, p. 38, while writing about the demons in the epic.
196. *Mbh.*, III. 217.8; 219.20.
197. *Mat. P.*, 179.42:
Bhavatībhiḥ prajāḥ sarvā rakṣaṇīyā na saṁśayaḥ.
198. Yaduvanshi makes a distinction between two separate types of Mātṛkās, the ones who were benign and conceived of as "mothers," and the others who were fierce and malevolent in nature. According to him, it is the popular cult of the benign Mātṛkās that is reflected in inscriptions, in such literary texts as the *Mṛcchakaṭika* and in the conception of the Mātṛkās as constantly accompanied by Gaṇeśa in iconography. The other type of the Mātṛkas, in his opinion, are the ferocious companions of Śiva and Pārvatī as described in the *Purāṇas*, see Yaduvanshi, *Śaiva Mata*, p. 141; cf. also *Ibid*, pp. 163-4. Such a distinction, we believe, is arbitrary and even misleading.

outside the brahmanical tradition.[199] They may have had their own names—although there is little indication of their having been of a fixed number—but when confronting the brahmanical society, it was by their group character rather than by specific names that they were recognizable. However, giving specific names to the Mātṛs and fixing their number seems to have started from the very beginning of their incorporation into the brahmanical fold. The attribution of these two specific features could well have been a simultaneous process, but available evidence indicates that the Mothers were first sought to be limited by number before they were specified by proper names. We have already suggested that the varying lists of the *Mahābhārata* do not warrant the originality or priority of any one group of Mothers over the others This being so, the attribution first of a number to the Mātṛs has to be presupposed to explain why the six wives of the seers together with Svāhā, the Kṛttikās, and the seven daughters of Hutāśana are all separately called *Mātaraḥ*.[200] Considering the popularity that the concept of the Sapta-mātṛkās enjoyed in literature and art in the subsequent period, it would not be surprising if, in the process of their entrance into the brahmanical pantheon, the number of the Mātṛkās was originally fixed at seven. Suggestions of this are contained in the *Mahābhārata* itself. When the daughters of Hutāśana are welcomed as "Mothers," they are specifically counted as seven, and Śiva in the *Śalya-parvan* is described as surrounded, amongst the others, also by the *Sapta-mātṛ-gaṇāh*.

If the number of the Mātṛs was originally sought to be fixed at seven, it is difficult to be certain of the names by which they were first recognized. The different groups of the Mothers in the *Āraṇyaka-parvan* only suggest a stage when they were still more or less anonymous. It seems however, that the position was changed by the time of the *Bṛhatsaṁhita* and the *Amarakoṣa*, and an entirely new element was added to the concept of the seven Mothers. They were identified as personified energies of certain gods and obtained names, appearances and other characteristics from their male counterparts.[201] There are thus two clearly-marked stages in the development of the concept of the Seven Mothers in the brahmanical tradition: first, when the Mothers were conceived of as a group of seven without any agreement over the names of the individual members, and second, when they were conceived of as energies of certain male gods and were identified as Brāhmī, *etc*. The latter development brings us to the stage of the traditional Sapta-mātṛkās of brahmanical tradition.

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[199] See also below, for an examination of various suggestions about the origin of the Mātṛs.

[200] While only six wives of the *ṛṣis* appear as Skanda's "Mothers," the place of the seventh is not quite vacant in view of the figure of 'chaste' Arundhati lurking in the background and especially of that of Svāhā, who was not only instrumental in the "fall" of the six and their eventual installation as Skanda's mothers, but who was herself fittingly accepted as one. Similarly, even though there is a tradition that the Kṛttikās are of a large, indefinite number, they were generally counted as six and sometimes as seven; see below.

[201] This is clearly mentiond in the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 57.56: *Mātṛgaṇah kartavyaḥ svanāmadevānurūpakṛtacihnaḥ*, and implied in *Amarakoṣa's Brāhmītyādyāstu Mātaraḥ*; see *AK*, NSP. edn., p. 8, line 70. See also *Nāṭya-śāstra*, III. 66.

The traditional Sapta-mātṛkās, as noted earlier, are generally counted as Brāhmī (or Brahmāṇī), Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṛṇavī, Vārāhī, Aindrī (or Indrāṇī or Māhendrī), and Cāmuṇḍā.[202] The epic anticipates the idea contained in the above list, though not the specific seven of the group, when, in the long description of the nature of the Mātṛs in the *Śalya-parvan*, it says that some Mātṛs partook of the nature of Yama, some of Rudra, some of Soma, some of Kubera, some of Varuṇa, some of Indra, some of Agni, some of Vāyu, some of Kumāra and some of Brahmā.[203] But the earliest definitely datable sources where the Sapta-mātṛs are referred to are the inscriptions of the early Cālukyas of Bādāmī. Whether the reference there is to the seven Mothers traditionally counted as Brāhmī *etc.*, is not absolutely certain, though highly probable. The *Amarakoṣa* definitely identifies the Mothers as "Brāhmī, *etc.*," (*Brāhmītyādyāstu mātaraḥ*), but does not specify the number, although here again the traditional Sapta-mātṛkās may be implied. The same may be said of the prescription in the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* which conceives the Mothers as female forms of their corresponding male counterparts but neither names them nor even identifies them in the manner of Amara by naming the first of the group.

In Indian literature and art in the mediaeval period and, therefore, presumably in the religious beliefs and practices of the brahmanical society represented by such sources, the Sapta-mātṛkās remain very enduring figures. The *Purāṇas* and *Āgamas* generally count the Mātṛkās as seven, beginning with Brāhmī,[204] and, as noted above, their icons are frequently recognized on the walls of mediaeval Hindu shrines. It appears, however, that once the Mothers had been conceived of as personified energies of the gods, ihis, and not the number seven, became the central concept behind them. This is suggested in the abbreviated reference to them in the *Amarakoṣa* and the simple, straightforward prescription of the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*. What is implied in the individual names of the Sapta-mātṛkās is allegorised in the Purāṇic myths, as in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, where they are described as emerging from the bodies of their male namesakes.

The conception that the Mātṛs are personified energies of gods is, in our opinion, clearly related to the Devi or Śakti cult in general, and its origin and history are intelligible only in relation to and as consequent upon the idea that the gods are all associated with their *Śaktis,* without whom they are powerless. This, incidentally, provides a logical clue towards a rough determination of the antiquity of the concept of traditional Sapta-mātṛkās. The idea that a supernatural being is possessed of power is a perfectly natural and innocent one and may be presumed to be an important constituent element in the conception of a deity in the earliest stages of religion.[205] But in India, in the context of the growing popularity of the cult of the Great Goddess, it assumed great significance when the power of the god was abstracted and allegorised as a feminine being. Distinguishable from the prior and more general philosophical idea of Supreme Female Energy as the creator of the universe and the main power behind it, and largely dependent upon it, the concept that each god has his own *Śakti* is a relatively later development.[206] No doubt, the *Ṛg-veda* has Indra's wife Śacī, who is essentially the persanification of that god's power,[207] and the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* anticipates it in its classic statement: *Māyāṁ tu prakṛtiṁ viddhi māyinaṁ tu maheśvaram,*[208] but the concept became popular only at a much later date. Its general currency has to be associated with the popularity of the Śakti cult and the organisation of the Tantric traditions, which, on the available evidence, cannot be dated before the beginning of the Christian era, and in fact become fully recognizable only from the 6th-7th century A.D.[209] The origin of the traditional Sapta-mātṛkās, counted as Brāhmī, *etc.*, therefore, cannot be placed much earlier than this period. This inference is quite in agreement with the literary and archaeological evidence. The earliest text which suggests the concept of the Mātṛs as personified energies of the gods and which can be dated with any certainty is the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* of Varāhamihira, generally assigned to the 6th century A.D.[210] The *Amarakoṣa* also, which refers to the Mātṛs as Brāhmī, *etc.*, cannot be dated before the Gupta period[211] and the same may be said of the *Devī-māhātmya* of

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[202] One of the frequently quoted verses giving the list is contained in the Bombay (NSP.) edn. of the *Amarakoṣa*, with the Māheśvarī commentary, p. 8:

Brāhmī māheśvarī caiva kaumārī vaiṣṇavī tathā,
Vārāhī ca tathendrāṇī cāmuṇḍā sapta-mātaraḥ.

[203] *Mbh.*, XI. 45.35-6:

Yāmyo raudryastathā saumyāḥ kauberyo'tha mahābalāḥ,
Vāruṇyo'tha ca māhendryastathāgneyyaḥ paraṁtapa. 35
Vāyavyāścātha kaumāryo brāhmyaśca bharatarṣabha,
...... 36

A line immediately following it, *viz. Vaiṣṇavyaśca tathā sauryo vārāhyaśca mahābalāḥ*, that appears in the vulgate text (Kinjawadekar's edn. IX. 46.38a), is rejected in the Poona Cr. edn. as interpolation; see notes on *Mbh.*, IX. 45.36 in the Cr. edn.

[204] See Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. II, p. 381.

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205. This is a very common observation by scholars writing on the nature and origin of religion. See, *e.g.*, Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, pp. 23 ff. Power is also the primary attribute of the Vedic gods; see Macdonell, *VM*, p. 19.

206. Cf. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*; p. 311.

207. See Gonda, *Some Observations on the Relations between "Gods" and "Powers" in the Veda, etc.*, p. 70. We are, of course, not dealing with the gods' "wives" like Varuṇānī, Agnāyī, *etc.*, which has no relevance here, even though, much later, they also might have come under the influence of the same idea and conceived of as their husbands' "Energies;" cf. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, II, p. 41, fn. 61; also Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, p. 1044.

208. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, IV. 10 (Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 734).

209. The precise origins of the Śākta and Tantric cults are obscure, but it is generally believed that they appear as recognizable religious movements in the post-Gupta period; see Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 167 ff., 199 ff., Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, I, pt. II, pp. 514 ff., esp. 530 ff.; Bhattacharya, H.D., in Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, pp. 315 ff.; cf. Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, pp. 101-2; also Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, II, p. 31.

210. See Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 517; Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 321. For a very recent discussion on the date of Varāhamihira, see Shastri, *India as seen in the Bṛhatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihira*, pp. 4 ff.

211. See Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 413, 517; Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, pp. 318, 321; cf. also Kosambi, D.D., "The Working Class in *Amarakoṣa*", *JOR*, XXIV, 1954-5, p. 57.

Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa[212] which gives a detailed description of the Mothers as the personified energies of the gods. Similarly, as noted above, the traditional Sapta-mātṛkās are not clearly recognizable in any sculpture dated before the Gupta period, and the grants of the Cālukyas of Badami are the earliest epigraphical records which refer to the Sapta-mātṛkās, probably in the sense of the Mātṛkās, counted as Brāhmī, *etc*. The *Mahābhārata* passages, therefore, which paint the Mātṛs as partaking of the natures of various gods must be regarded as belonging to the later stages of the development of the epic; and, whatever, may be the date of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata, at least those sections of the text which refer to the Mothers as Brāhmī, *etc*., under the name Nāṭya-mātṛs, are not likely to have been added before the Gupta period.[213]

One important aspect of the development discussed above must be emphasized to avoid possible misunderstanding of the concept of the Seven Mothers. While it is undeniable that the traditional Mātṛkās, Brāhmī, *etc*., came into being in the background of the general Śakta-Tantric ideas, the individual goddesses of the group so formed are not quite parallel to the concept of a god associated with his *Śakti*. The independent group character of the Mothers is ever the dominant feature and there is scarcely any individualisation of the constituent members of the group.[214] Thus, in myth or iconography, the individul members have nothing to do with their respective male counterparts from whom they borrow their names and many other characteristics. When forming associations, they always form them as a group. If Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, *etc.*, are to be individually associated at all with other divinities, it is perhaps not so much with their respective male counterparts, but with the Great Goddess as her different aspects or form.[215]

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[212] On the date of the *Devī-māhātmya*, see above, Ch. II.

[213] There has been considerable discussion about the date of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, which, according to various opinions ranges between the 4th cent. B.C. and the 8th cent. A.D. The text is generally acknowledged to be a compilation from several different sources. The consensus appears to be to date the core of the work to 2nd-3rd cent. A.D., to which additions were made in the following centuries. Particularly suspect are the first five and the last two chapters of the text. See Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 372, 407; *The Sanskrit Drama*, p. 13; Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. III, fasc. 1 (tr. from original German by Kohn), p. 10; Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 269-70; *Nāṭya-śāstra*, ed. Ghosh, vol. I, Intro., pp. xlix ff., esp. lxxix ff.; Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, pp. 40 ff.; Dasgupta and De, *A History of Sanskrit Literature: Classical Period*, vol. I, pp. cxiv, 522; see also a recent and balanced appraisal of various opinions in Shekhar, *Sanskrit Drama: Its Origin and Decline*, pp. 42 ff.

[214] One possible exception may be Vārāhī, but her independent status is intelligible not so much in the context of the Mātṛs as of the popularity of such goddesses in general in the Tantric period, and, possibly, also of that of the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu; see also Banerjea, J.N., "The Vārāhī Temple at Caurāśī," *Dr. Mirashi Felicitation Volume*, pp. 349 ff.; Agrawala, R.C., "A Rare Image of Vāhāhi in the British Museum," *Or. Art*., n.s., IX, no. 3, 1963, p. 167.

The case of Cāmuṇḍā, who is generally counted as the seventh in the group of the Sapta-mātṛkās seems different. Since her name is not formed like that of the other Mātṛkās, Brāhmī, *etc*., she must be regarded as a goddess of independent origin. It is significant that the *Devī-māhātmya* section of the *Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa* does not refer to Cāmuṇḍā while describing the origin of the Mātṛs as the personified "energies" of various gods, and finds it necessary to explain the origin of her name separately. Cāmuṇḍā does not appear in the epics (cf. Hopkins, *EM*, p. 226; *Mar. P.*, tr. Pargiter, Intro., p. xi), but her independent popular cult is clearly suggested by the Sanskrit drama *Mālatīmādhava*, which introduces this goddess and her temple in the city of Padmāvatī and refers to the attempt by her votaries to offer a human sacrifice there; see *Mālatīmādhava*, Act V. Bāṇabhaṭṭa also refers to a shrine of Cāmuṇḍā in a dense grove in the Vindhyan forest regions (*Gahana-taruṣaṇḍanirmita-cāmuṇḍāmaṇḍapair-vanapradeśaiḥ*...; *Harṣccarita*, ed. Kane, 7th Ucchvāsa,

(Contd.)

Perhaps for the reason that the central idea behind the concept of the Saptamātṛkās was their being personified energies of gods, in literature, new goddesses with names formed in a similar manner replace old ones or sometimes are added to the list. A good instance is the account of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* which has Nārasiṁhī in place of the usual Cāmuṇḍa. Similar instances may be cited for Raudrī, Kauberī, *etc.*,[216]

Apart, however, from the fact that the group of the Seven Mothers remained somewhat unstable in view of replacements and additions in the shape of goddesses of similarly-formed names, [217] the number seven, as far as literary evidence goes, cannot be regarded as the only standard one. We hear fairly frequently of the eight Mothers (Aṣṭa-mātṛkās), and sometimes of nine, thirteen, fourteen and sixteen. In the lists of eight' most of the names are the same as those of the common Sapta-mātṛkā list. In one such frequently appearing list, only Carcikā is added;[218] in another, while Aindrī and Cāmuṇḍā are dropped, Raudrī, Carmamuṇḍā and Kālasaṁkarṣinī are added to make eight.[219] The *Varāha Purāṇa* has a very different list of eight Mothers, *viz.*, Yogīśvarī, Maheśvari, Vaiṅaṣṇvī, Brāhmī-svayambhu, Kaumārī, Indrajā,

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p. 68). As an independent goddess, Cāmuṇḍā is akin to Kālī and conceived of as the fierce form of Devī; see *Mār. P.*, ch. 84, esp. 84.4-7, 26 (tr. Pargiter, 87.4-7, 25, pp. 499, 500).

Similar appears to be the case with Carcikā. Although often counted as the eighth in the group of the Aṣṭa-mātṛkās (see below), she seems to have had an independent history.

[215] See below.

[216] Such instances may be gathered from the lists collected in the *Śabdakalpadsuma*, III, pp. 691 ff., s.v. *Mātā* and *Mātṛkā*. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 692a, where the following verse is reproduced from the Bharata's commentary on Amara:

Brāhmī ca vaiṣṇavī caindrī raudrī vārāhikī tathā,
Kauverī caiva kaumārī mātaraḥ sapta-kīrtitāḥ.

[217] *Śabdakalpadruma*, III, p. 692b, s.v. *Mātā*, incidentally, has an entirely different list of seven whose names have no relation at all with the traditional Brāhmī, *etc.*:

Ādau mātā gureḥ patnī brāhmaṇī rājapatnikā,
Gāvī dhātrī tathā pṛthvī saptaitā mātaraḥ smṛtāḥ.

This is apparently an instance of a list made purely on the basis of the number seven of the traditional Sapta-mātṛkās, and indicates the popularity of the latter.

[218] *Śabdakalpadruma*, III, p. 692a, s.v. *Mātā*:

Brāhmī māheśvarī caindrī vārāhī vaiṣṇavī tathā,
Kaumāri caiva cāmuṇḍā carcciketyaṣṭa mātaraḥ.

[219] See Böhtlingk and Roth, *SW*, V, p. 700, s.v. *Mātar*: "acht Mütter."

Yamadaṇḍhārī, Anasūyā and Varāhā.[220] Some late citations by Khare from Kṣirasvmin, the *Suprabhedāgama*' the *Nirṇayasindhu*, the *Śrītattvaṇidhi* and some other works fill in the eighth place by Kālasaṁkarṣaṇī, Vāmani, Taināyakī, Mahālakṣmi and Caṇḍikā.[221] The *Brahmāṇda Purāṇa* also names Mahālakṣmī as the eighth Mother.[222] Similarly constructed are the lists of nine Mothers. In one, Nārasiṁhikā and Caṇḍika are added and Raudri appears for Māheśvarī; in another, very different, only three of the standard seven, Vārāhī, Cāmuṇḍā and Indrāṇi, are retained, and Nārasiṁhi, Vāruṇi, Lakṣmi, Kāpālī, and Kurukulyā are added.[223] Groups of Mothers consisting of more than nine members are very different lists indeed, the only reason for treating them as Mothers being because they are labelled *Mātaraḥ* and form a group. Thus Kaśyapa's thirteen wives are *Lokānāṁ mātaraḥ*;[224] the *Skanda Purāṇa* has a list of fourteen in which Carcikā, and perhaps Yogeśvari and Caṇḍika may be said to be the only familar Mothers;[225] and the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇaṁ* has two different lists of sixteen, both of which include different types of female relatives, or elderly females, to whom respect is normally due, suggesting the development of the concept of the divinity of human mothers on the basis of the divine ones.[226] A frequently quoted list of sixteen is actually a medly of several types of deities like Gaurī, Padmā, Sacī, Sāvitrī, with Vijayā, Jayā, Devasenā, Medhā, Svāhā, Svādhā, Śānti, Puṣṭi, Dhṛti, Tuṣṭi, Ātmadevatā and Duladevatā.[227]

Many of the above lists, especially the larger ones, are clearly late productions and must be viewed in the light of the general popular cult of the Mātṛs as well as the popular standardized lists of seven or eight. At least one thing is certain that iconographic texts and archaeology together generally support a list of Seven Mothers, and sometimes of eight, with members who were, with the exception of Cāmuṇḍā, normally conceived of as the personified energies of their male counterparts. It is these Mātṛkās, with the attributes, ornaments and vehicles, *etc.*, of their male namesakes, that are recognized in the carvings of mediaeval shrines.

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[220] As cited in Karmarkar, *The Religions of India*, I, p. 109.

[221] *Ibid.*

[222] *Ibid.*, According to Karmarkar, the number of the Divine Mothers was originally eight representing the counterparts of the eight forms of Śiva. In our opinion, this is purely speculative. As suggested above, the Mātṛs appear to have been originally of an indefinite number, and, in the process of their absorption in the brahmanical pantheon, they were probably first counted as seven.

[223] *Ibid.*, and Böhtlingk and Roth, *SW*, V, p. 700, s.v. *Mātar*: "neun Mütter." Explaining the "Nine Ambikās" in the *Naiṣadhacarita*, VII. 97 (=VII. 98 in NSP. edn. of the text), which the commentary explains as the seven Mothers, Brāhmī, *etc.*, with Gaurī and Sarasvatī added to them, Handiqui has collected a few other lists of the eight and nine Mothers; see *Naiṣadhacarita*, tr. Handiqui, pp. 555 ff., Vocabulary, s.v. *Ambikā*.

[224] See Böhtlingk and Roth, *SW*, V, p. 700, s.v. *Mātar*, q. from *Bhā. P*, VI. 6. 24. See also Hopkins, *EM*, p. 199.

[225] See Karmarkar, *The Religions of India*, I. p. 109.

[226] As quoted in the *Śabdakalpadruma*, III, pp. 691c and 694b, s.v. *Mātā* and *Mātṛkā* respectively. A slightly larger list of the Mothers from the same *Purāṇa* is also reproduced in the *Śabdakalpadruma*, III, pp. 694a-b, s.v. *Mātṛkā*.

[227] They are called *Gauryyādiṣoḍaśamātṛkāḥ* in the *Śabdakalpadruma*, III, p. 692a, s.v. *Mātā*. Importance of the number 16 (see Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, ch. IV, pp. 115 ff.) must be responsible for the conception of the 16 Mothers; cf. *Ṣoḍaśopacāra*.

In the context of the origin, nature, names and number of the Mātṛs, we may also take note of their special associations. The brahmanical literature sometimes associates the Mātṛs with the cult of Viṣṇu. We have already noticed the Viṣṇuite Mātṛkās in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, who are always said to accompany Nṛsiṁha and receive offerings along with him, although the whole episode appears like the concoction of a Viṣṇuite editor asserting the supremacy of Viṣṇu over Śiva. In fact the more important element in the story appears to be the role of the Nṛsiṁha from of Viṣṇu as the chastiser of the Māstṛ. In the *Nārada-Pāñcarātra*, if Viṣṇu is called *Mahāmātṛgaṇeśvara*, he is also *Mātṛcakrapramathana*.[228] However, it is not unlikely that in the process of coming to terms with Śakti worship, the Viṇṣuites occasionally looked kindly also upon the Mātṛs.[229] The Gaṅgdhār inscription[230] is sometimes cited as evidence of the association of the two cults, because the same builder, himself a devotee of Viṣṇu, is said to have built shrines both for Viṣṇu and the Mothers.[231] But the association here may be more superficial than real, and may indicate no more than the mutual toleration and peaceful co-existence of the two cults. In fact, all indications are that Viṣṇuism hardly made any contribution to the formation and growth of the Mātṛ cult.

The closest connection of the Mātṛs appears to be with Śiva and his mythic circle. In the myths of Skanda's birth in the *Mahābhārata*, it is with Skanda-Kārttikeya that the Mātṛs are most intimately linked. Such also is the case in the early Kadamba and Cālukya records and in the Bihar fragmentary pillar inscription of the time of Skandagupta-Pūrugupta. A *Pariśiṣṭa* of the *Atharva-veda*, dealing with the worship of Skanda, also called Dhūrta, prescribes the invocation of the Mātṛs along with Skanda-Kārttikeya,[232] and a similar prescription is available in the description of apparently the same rite in the Baudhāyana *Gṛhyapariśiṣṭasūtra*.[233] As cited by Rao, the *Kumāra*

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[228] As quoted in Böhtlingk and Roth, *SW*, V, p. 700 s.v. *Mātar*.

[229] In the hierarchical presentation of the goddesses in the *Devī-Māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, the chief form of the Great Goddess is said to be the Yoganidrā or Mahāmāyā of Viṣṇu, of which all other goddesses are manifestations. But it would be futile to search for genuine Viṣṇuite elements here; cf. Rao, *EHI*, I. pt. II, pp. 334-7; see also above, Ch. II. Lakṣmī is naturally conceived of as the Supreme Goddess in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*; see Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 445.

[230] Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 72 ff.

[231] See Sircar, D.C., in Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 426.

[232] *Atharva-veda Pariśiṣṭa*, XX (*Skandayāgaḥ* or *Dhūrtakalpaḥ*). 2.6:

Yaś ca mātṛ-gaṇair nityaṁ sadā parivṛto yuvā,
Tam ahaṁ mātṛbhiḥ sārdhaṁ dhūrtaṁ āvāhayāmy aham.

[233] Harting, *Selections from the Baudhāyana-Gṛhyapariśiṣṭasūtra*, pp. 25, 56. The relevant verse reads as:

Āyātu devottamaḥ kārttikeyo brahmaṇyaḥ putraḥ saha mātṛbhiḥ,
Dhātrā viśākhena ca viśvarūpo juṣṭaṁ baliṁ sānucaro juṣasva.

In his translation (see *Ibid.*, p. 56), Harting equates the "Mothers" with the Kṛttikās.

Tantra prescribes the installation of the Sapta-mātṛkās among the *Parivāva-devatās* in the temple of Subrahmaṇya—another name of Skanda-Kārttikeya.[234] A very close relationship between the two cults, at some stages of their history, seems undeniable. Still, it is not possible to assert that the association of the Mātṛs with Skanda is original, because in the *Mahābhārata*, both Skanda and the Mātṛs remain very obscure figures. In fact the myths are so confused that the very concept of a "mother" or "mothers" of Skanda is suspect;[235] and, if the Mātṛs are linked to him as his mothers, they appear equally prominently as independent deities unrelated to him.[236] The close relation of the two, therefore, has to be regarded as a relatively late development in the history of the Mātṛ cult, and, it would appear, one that was also popular in some select circles. In the traditional origin of the Mātṛs in the Purāṇic myths, Skanda is completely ignored, and moreover, what is more significant, in iconography the Mātṛs are invariably accompanied by Gaṇeśa—the other son of Śiva—and Vīrabhadra—a form of Śiva himself—, but never by Skanda-Kārttikeya.[237]

Of all the members of the Śiva family, perhaps the most enduring relationship of the Mātṛs was with Śiva himself. Suggestions of this are already contained in the Skanda-myth of the *Mahābhārata*, where Skanda is portrayed as looking upon his father Śiva surrounded by various beings including the *Sapta-mātṛ-gaṇāḥ*. Purāṇic myths, as we have seen, depict Śiva as creating the Mātṛs, and, as in the epic, the Mātṛs are present in Śiva's retinue also in the *Purāṇas*. An instance from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* has been cited earlier. In the *Devī-māhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, it is said that when the *Śaktis* of the different gods came into being, they surrounded Siva and the latter said to Caṇḍikā: "Let the Asuras be slain forthwith through my good-will."[238]

The Mātṛs were not simply the companions of Śiva as a ferocious fighting group, amongst several others of similar nature. An even closer relationship between the two must be imagined to appreciate expressions like *Mātṛbhaktāya* and *Mātṛṇāṁ pataye namaḥ* used for Śiva in prayers addressed to that god in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* respectively.[239] In the *Kumārasaṁbhava* of Kālidāsa, where Śiva is described as being decked for marriage, the Mātṛs are said to have been the first to place the ornaments in front of him, and later, in the marriage procession, the resplendent Mothers lead the train immediately behind the groom.[240] In a description of the same event in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, Vīraka, goading everybody to hasten with the marriage procession, notes with a touch of impatience that thronged by the Mātṛs, Śiva, together with the horses of his chariot, is not able to move.[241] The same text also contains an *āvāhanā-mantra* of Rudra-Śiva which suggests that the Mothers, along with several other deities, were supposed to be yoked to Siva's chariot.[242] A very close connection between the Mothers and Śiva seems to be hinted at also in the *Amarakoṣa's* list of deities where the *Mātaraḥ* appear immediately after Śiva and even before the names of Umā-Pārvatī.[243]

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[234] Rao, *EHI*, II, p. 423.

[235] Cf. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 362. Apart from the question of the origin of the group of goddesses called Mātṛs, it has been suggested that the conception of the "mothers" of Skanda might have developed on account of the association of Skanda with Agni. In other words, since Agni is called in the Ṛg-vedic hymns *Mātariśvan*, lit. "growing inside his mother," the epithet might have been transferred in course of time from the father to the son; see Mukhopadhyay, Manmatha, "Some Notes on Skanda-Kārttikeya," *IHQ*, VII, 1931. p. 316.

[236] It is interesting to note that when the Mātṛs are introduced for the first time in Skanda's story in the *Āraṇyaka parvan* of *Mahābhārata*, it is to kill the child Skanda.

[237] Cf. Getty, *Gaṇeśa*, p. 12.

[238] *Mār. P.*, 85.21 (tr. Pargiter, 88.21, pt. II, p. 503):

Tataḥ parivṛtastābhirīśāno devaśaktibhiḥ,
Hanyatāmasurāḥ śīghraṁ mama prītyāha caṇḍikām.

[239] See above also *Br. P.*, *Pūrva-bhāga* (*Anuṣaṅga-pāda*), 25.70. Cf. *Bhūta-mātṛ-gaṇādhyakṣam*, *virūpakṣam* apparently used for Śiva, in the Kinjawadekar's edn. of the *Mahābhārata*. For the identity of Virūpākṣa with Śiva, see Hopkins, *EM*, p. 226.

The Mātṛs seem to have been associated with Śiva not only in myth but also in ritual. It may be inferred from the iconographic prescriptions in which Śiva in the form of Vīrabhadra or Vīṇādhara is a constant companion of the Mātṛs and whose sculptural illustrations are noticed frequently in mediaeval shrines of Śivaite character. But there are explicit textual recommendations for the joint worship of Śiva and the *Mātṛ-gaṇa*. One such recommendation is available in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*.[244] The *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* also prescribes the worship of Rudra with the Mothers in the rite of *Puṣyasnāna*.[245] In the *Andhakavadha* chapter of the *Matsya Purāṇa*, it is expressly said that when Nṛsiṁha-Viṣṇu disappeared with his own group of the Mātṛs, Śiva stayed behind with the Mothers created by him and disappeared only after installing the *Saptamātaraḥ* in his Raudrasthāna.[246] The *Rājataraṅginī* of Kalhaṇa records joint shrines and worship of Śiva and the Mātṛs, and the worship of the Mothers by the devotees of Śiva.[247]

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[240] *Kumārasaṁbhava*, VII. 30, 38:

Tāvadbhavasyāpi kuberaśaile tatpūrvapāṇigrahaṇānurūpam,
Prasādhanaṁ mātṛbhirādṛtābhirnyastaṁ purastātpuraśāsanasya. 30
……
Taṁ mātaro devamanuvrajantyaḥ svavāhanakṣobhacalāvataṁsāḥ,
Mukhaiḥ prabhāmaṇḍalareṇugauraiḥ padmākaraṁ cakrurivāntarīkṣam. 38

[241] *Mat. P.*, 154.457:

Padaṁ na yadrathaturagaiḥ puradviṣā pramucyate bahutara mātṛsaṅkulam.

[242] *Ibid.*, 266.45 ff., esp. v. 45.

[243] *Amarakoṣa* (NSP. edn.), pp. 7-8.

[244] *Viṣ.* Dh. *P.*, III. 222. 99.

[245] *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 47.26:

Grahāṁśca sarvanakṣatrai rudrāṁśca saha mātṛbhiḥ.

[246] *Mat. P.*, 179.87-9:

…,
Tatrāpi pūrvajo devo jagadārttiharo haraḥ. 87
Raudrasya mātṛvargasya datvā rudrastu pārthiva,
Raudrāṁ divyāṁ tanuṁ tatra mātṛmadhya vyavasthitaḥ. 88
Sapta tā mātaro devyaḥ sārdhanārīnaraḥ śivaḥ,
Niveśya raudraṁ tatsthānaṁ tatraivāntaradhīyata. 89

[247] *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, I. 122; 335; III. 99; V. 55. Somewhat similar evidence is available also in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva; see *Kathāsaritsāgara*, tr. Tawney, IV, pp. 69-70, 225; IX, pp. 17-8.

The Mātṛs' association with the cult of Śiva, therefore, appears to have been a very intimate one, but how old this association was and whether other members of the Śivaite family were necessarily allied to the Mātṛs on that account is difficult to say. It is particularly difficult in the case of Skanda, since the *Mahābhārata* evidence, which seems to be our earliest definite source of the cult of the Mātṛs and which aligns these deities both with Skanda and Śiva, does not appear to admit the priority of one over the other. But the probability, in view of Śiva's known history, is in favour of his association with the Mātṛs being earlier, whether or not Skanda was allied to them through this source.[248] It seems certain, however, that Śiva's close association with the Mothers was responsible for the similar relation of his son Gaṇeśa with those deities. Like Śiva as Vīrabhadra on the one side, Gaṇeśa always flanks the Mātṛs on the other in iconographic prescriptions and sculptural illustrations;[249] and, along with the Mothers, he seems to have been included in certain Tāntrika rites.[250] In the *Īśāna-śivagurudeva-paddhati*, he is invoked, under the name Vighnanāyaka, to protect little children from the demon-goddesses by removing all obstacles to a successful propitiation of the Sapta-Mātṛkās.[251] Gaṇeśa is a very late entrant into the brahmanical pantheon and opinions are divided about the origin of this elephant-headed god.[252] But as there is no indication of the association of Gaṇeśa with the Mothers before the former was incorporated into the Śivaite family, and as Śiva himself was conceived of as the lord of the *gaṇas* at an early date,[253] it is likely that Gaṇeśa obtained the guardianship of the Mātṛs from his father.

The Mātṛs' association with the cult of the Great Goddess—Mahādevī, Śakti—might perhaps also be a legacy of the Śiva cult, since it is generally believed that the Devī cult developed and attained a classical form in association with that of Śiva but it should not be unduly emphasized. In the apocryphal *Devī-stotras* in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṁśa*, and similar eulogies in the *Purāṇas*, the Devī emerges as the Supreme Goddess in her own right. Only nominally attached to Śiva, she is otherwise, the apotheosis of the idea of the female energy as the creator of the universe and the force behind it.[254] It is easy to imagine that the Mātṛs were conceived of as forms of this Goddess, in the same way as were all goddesses according to the Purāṇic accounts. It is explicitly said in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* that, taunted by the demon Śumbha for having sought the assistance of the Mātṛs, *etc.*, the Goddess replied that they were

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248. See also below, for discussion on the possibility of a very early association of the Mātṛs with Śiva.
249. See above; also Getty, *Gaṇeśa*, pp. 10 ff.
250. See, *e.g.*, *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, X. 118 ff., esp. 124, 127.
251. As cited in Getty, *Gaṇeśa*, p. 12.
252. See Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 147 ff.; Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, I, p. 7; II, p. 4; Getty, *Gaṇeśa*, pp. 1 ff. and *Ibid.*, Intro. by Foucher, pp. xv, ff.; Aravamuthan, T.G., "Gaṇeśa: Clue to a Cult and a Culture", *JOR*, XVIII, pt. IV, pp. 221 ff.; Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 354 ff., *etc.*
253. In the hymns of the *Ṛg-veda*, the Maruts are always imagined as forming a troop (*gaṇa*) and, at the same time, frequently spoken of as the sons of Rudra, or as Rudras or Rudriyas; see Macdonell, *VM*, pp. 74, 77-8. Rudra-Śiva is mentioned as *Gaṇapati* in the *Śatarudrīya*; see *TS*, IV. 5.4; see also Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 103-4, 147.
254. See above, Ch. II, for the concept and cult of the Great Goddess.

but her own forms, and demonstrated this by absorbing them into her body.[255] The Purāṇic passages, however, are rather an extension of a philosophical concept than evidence of the actual association of the cults. But it is highly likely that such an association also existed.

SOME THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE MĀTṚS

Definite literary evidence of the cult of the Mātṛs does not go further back than the *Mahābhārata* and the dramas of Bhāsa, and some reliefs of the early Kuṣāṇa period in the Mathura Musuem, as noted above, are possibly the earliest archaeological evidence of this cult, but various suggestions have been made about the origin and early history of these divinities and sometimes their antiquity has been stretched back to the Indus Valley and the early Vedic culture.

The very general suppositions that the Mātṛs are old divinities of India or that they are of non-brahmanical, tribal or Dravidic origin are likely to be true even if not definitely proved.[256] Our own examination of the concept of the Mātṛs in classical Sanskrit literature and in archaeology clearly suggests the un-brahmanical nature of these deities. A great antiquity of the Mātṛs is also suggested by the very primitive form in which they appear in the *Mahābhārata*. Again a considerable previous history of these goddesses has to be persumed to account for their widespread and popular cult in India from about the beginning of the Christian era.

The more specific theories, however, which derive the Mātṛs from the one or the other aspect of the Indus Valley or early Vedic cultre or from concepts mentioned in the Vedic literature need to be critically examined to test their validity. It appears to us, as the following discussion will show, that several such theories are built up on the basis of aspects which are either not essential to the concept of the Mātṛs or are apparently late developments in their character. Even while there may be sufficient grounds for the presumption that the Mātṛs are amongst the oldest divinities of India, any suggestion of their origin from a specific ancient source is not likely to prove satisfactory if it does not take into account the essential character of these deities as reflected in the epic and Purāṇic texts and in the "belles-lettres" of the classical Sanskrit literature.

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[255] *Mār. P.*, 87.1-4 (tr. Pargiter, 90.1-4; p. 509):

Ṛṣiruvāca:
Niśumbhaṁ nihataṁ dṛṣṭvā bhrātaraṁ prāṇasaṁmitam,
Hanyamānaṁ balaṁ caiva śuṁbhaḥ kruddho' bravīdvacaḥ. 1
Balāvalepādduṣṭe tvaṁ mā durge garvamāvaha,
Anyāsāṁ balamāśritya yudhyase yātimāninī. 2
Śri-devyuvāca:
Ekaivāham jagatyatra dvitīyā kā mamāparā,
Paśyaitā duṣṭa mayyeva viśaṁtyo madvibhūtayaḥ. 3
Ṛṣiruvāca:
Tataḥ samastāstā devyo brahmāṇīpramukhā layam,
Tasyā devyāstanau jagmur ekaivāsīttadāṁbikā.

Incidentally, K.M. Banerjea's and Jivananda Vidyasagara's editions of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* read *devyāḥ stanau*, instead of *devyāstanau*. Since Pargiter based his translation of the *Purāṇa* on Banerjea's edition, his rendering speaks of absorption into the breasts of the Goddess. On the significance of these variants, see our own, "An Interesting Variant in the *Devī-māhātmya*," *Purāṇa*, vol. xxv, pt. 2, July 1983, pp. 235-245. In the *Vāmana* and *Vārāha Purāṇas*, as we have seen, the Mātṛs are said to have been born from the person of Devī herself;

[256] See *e.g.* Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, pp. 415-6; Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, pp. 276, 286. This is also implied in the treatments of Arbman, Kosambi, *etc.*, examined below.

We may now examine some attempts to find the prototypes of the Mātṛs in the Indus Valley and the early Vedic culture.

A terracotta seal from Mohenjodaro represents a human figure standing between the two branches of what looks like a *pīpal* tree, and to its proper right is kneeling human figure doing obeisance, behind whom is depicted a human-faced goat. In the lower ground of the seal, there is a row of seven standing human figures, all facing in the same direction and away from the central figure in the tree.[257] Perhaps all the human figures in the composition are females, although this has also been doubted. The seal undoubtedly represents a religious scene, but there is no unanimity about its exact nature. Marshall understood it as a representation of the worship of the tree-goddess and took the seven standing females below to be officiants or ministrants of the goddess performing some kind of ritual dance, and the human-faced animal behind the kneeling worshipper as some minor deity. Mackay also was certain in his mind that no animal-sacrifice is depicted here, and the human-faced goat may be a form of the goddess herself. According to him, the similar headgear suggests that all the human figures in the composition are to be understood as deities, the so-called kneeling worshipper and the seven standing females being divinities of lesser rank. He noted the mystical number seven of the standing figures and tentatively suggested that they recall the goddess Śītalā and her six sisters.[258]

Mackay did not specifically identify the seven figures standing in a row on the Mohenjodaro seal with the Sapta-mātṛkās of classical Hinduism, but there is no doubt that such an idea was on his mind.[259] Subsequent interpreters of the seal have been less circumspect than Marshall and Mackay and have even read into it aspects of Ṛg-vedic ritual and belief. Some have unhesitatingly seen in the seven figures prototypes of the Sapta-mātṛkās.[260]

The predilection of the the Vedic religion towards the number seven is well known,[262] and the *Ṛg-veda* does speak of "Seven Mothers" and "Seven Sisters" (*Sapta-mātaraḥ, Sapta-svasāraḥ*).[262] Emphasizing the vegetative and fertility aspect of the scene

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257. See Marshall (ed.), *MIC.*, I, pp. 63-5; pl. XII, 18.
258. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, I, pp. 337-8; *Early Indus Civilization*, p. 58.
259. See Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, I, p. 338, fn. 3.
260. Only those views are considered here which have a bearing on the question of the Mātṛs or the Sapta-mātṛkās.
261. See Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 41, 79, *etc.*, also by the same author, "Numbers (Aryan)", *ERE*, 9, pp. 407 ff..

on the Mohenjodaro seal, Wijesekera has suggested that the seven figures below represent the seven river-goddesses of the *Ṛg-veda*, the kneeling figure the Sarasvatī-as chief of them, and the figure in the tree, the male procreant deity.[263] He is not so much concerned with finding in the seal prototypes of any deities of later Hinduism, as in demonstrating that there is strong evidence of the existence of fertility ideas in the *Ṛg-veda*, that the Ṛg-vedic river-goddesses are fertility goddesses, and that the Mohenjodaro seal represents precisely the same idea. But, in a recent paper dealing with the question of the origin of the Sapta-mātṛkās, Dhavalikar finds in the seal an exact representation of the Ṛg-vedic passage where the *Sapta-mātaraḥ* are said to regulate the preparation of Soma.[264] According to him, the deity in the tree reprerents the god Soma standing between the branches of the stylized Soma plant; the kneeling figure being Agni by the side of his *vāhana*, the ram, and the seven figures below the *Sapta-mātaraḥ* mentioned in the hymn. Apparently basing his entire argument on the identical number seven, Dhavalikar believes that the Mohenjodaro seal, and the Ṛg-vedic passage referred to, together provide definite evidence that the Sapta-mātṛkās of the Purāṇic tradition or their prototypes were worshipped during the Harappan and early Vedic times. Conscious that the "Seven Mothers" mentioned in the Ṛg-vedic hymn as regulating the preparation of Soma juice may be the "Seven Rivers," *Sapta-sindhavaḥ*, and that the Waters are conceived of as goddesses in the *Ṛg-veda*, he makes another suggestion that "the Sapta-mātṛkās were essentially water-deities to the Indo-Aryans."

The identification of the seven standing figures on the Mohenjodaro seal with the Seven Mothers regulating the preparation of the Soma juice and the Sapta-mātṛkās of the Purāṇic tradition, as also the suggestion that the latter were essentially Indo-Aryan water deities, are apparently the main points Dhavalikar wants to make, but in his enthusiasm for finding the prototype of the Purāṇic Satpa-mātṛkās, he not only notes various other passages in the Ṛg-vedic hymns where the number seven is prominently used, such as the seven tones (*sapta-vāṇīḥ*),[265] the seven rays (*sapta-raśmayaḥ*) used both

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262. For the "Seven Mothers," see *e.g. RV*, I. 34.8; 141.2; VIII. 96.1; X. 86.36; 102.4, *etc.*. For the "Seven Sisters," see *Ibid.*, I. 164.3: 191.14; VI. 61.10; VIII. 41.2; 59.4; IX. 66.8; 86.36; X. 5.5. There are numerous references in the *Ṛg-veda* to *Sapta-sindhavaḥ* or the "Seven Rivers," as in I. 32.12, and there are also passages in which it is very clear that the Seven Sisters or the Seven Mothers are the Seven Rivers, *e.g.*, *RV*, I. 34.8; VI. 61.10; VIII. 96.1; perhaps VIII. 41.2, as also IX. 66.8 read with st. 6, *etc.*.

263. Wijesekera, O.H. de A., "Ṛg-vedic River-goddesses and an Indus Valley Seal," *Dr. C. Kunhan Raja Presentation Volume*, pp. 428 ff..

264. Dhavalikar, M.K., "The Origin of Sapta-mātṛkās," *BDCRI*, XXI, 1960-1, pp. 19 ff. The Ṛg-vedic passage under reference occurs at IX. 102.4, and reads as:
Jajñānaṁ sapta mātaro vedhāmaśāsata śriye,
Ayaṁ dhruvo rayīṇāṁ ciketa yat.

265. Dhavalikār cites *RV*, II. 2.9, but it makes no mention of *Sapta-vāṇīḥ*. The "seven tones", however, are mentioned at a few other places, *e.g.*, *RV*, III. 1.6; 7.1; VIII. 59.3, but never clearly as an epithet of the goddess Vāc, as claimed by Dhavalikar. In the first two of the three places cited above, Sāyaṇa understands the "Seven tones" as the seven rivers, and does not comment on the third, which incidentally occurs in one of the Vālakhilya hymns.

for the Sun-god and Agni,[266] and Agni of the seven mothers (*sapta-mātaraḥ*)[267] or seven tongues (*sapta-jihvāḥ*)—the last suggested in the *Ṛg-veda* and individually named later in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*[268]—, but also quotes Dikshit with approval:, . . "therecan be no denying the fact that these seven tongues correspond to the 'seven sisters' or the Saptamātṛkās with whom we are now familiar."[269]

It must be pointed out first that the severe limitations of using the seals and similar objects of the Indus Valley culture for the reconstruction of religious beliefs and practices of those times, and the risk of reading too much into such materials, have been frequently noted.[270] The representation on the Mohenjodaro seal under reference, on which various interpretations have been put, itself provides a good illustration. While the general opinion appears to be to treat the central figure standing between the two branches of the tree as female,[271] which is also supported to a certain extent by the very common belief in the later periods that the guardian spirits of trees were frequently female beings,[272] both Wijesekera and Dhavalikar regard the figure as male.[273] Some have even doubted whether a female figure is represented on the seal at all.[274] In our opinion, the seal appears good evidence of worship of a tree-deity which is clearly suggested by the position of the principal figure and, even more, by the suppliant attitude of the kneeling figure facing it. But to read more than this seems unwarronted. Presuming, as is generally done, that the figure in the tree and the seven standing in a row in the lower ground are all females, and agreeing with Mackay that the similar headgear *etc.*, suggest the divinity of all the human figures in the composition, we are still nowhere near a definite possibility that the seven standing figures are the *Sapta-sindhavaḥ* or *Sapta-mātaraḥ* of the Ṛg-vedic hymns or the *Sapta-mātṛkās* of the Purāṇic tradition. At best, the scene would then appear to represent some aspect of a myth connected with a female tree-deity in which probably seven other female divine figures played a part. Apparently, as Sullivan also has pointed out,[275] not much should be made of the number seven here, for, notwithstanding a few other specimens from Harappa and Mohenjodaro, cited by Dhavalikar, which portray seven human figures in one way or the other,[276] there is one seal impression with a representation very similar to the Mohenjodaro seal referred to but showing only six so-called "votaries" or "ministrants."[277]

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[266] For the seven rays of the Sun-god, see *RV*, VIII. 72.16, and for the seven rays of Agni, see *Ibid.*, I. 146.1; II. 5.2; cf. also IV. 50.4.

[267] *RV*, I. 141.2. The seven mothers of Agni are here called *śivā* or auspicious.

[268] The tongues of Agni are frequently mentioned in the *Ṛg-veda e.g.*, at VIII. 72.18, and sometimes they are counted as three, as at III. 20.2, but *RV*, III. 6.2 also refers to the seven tongues of the god (cf. also Sāyaṇa's commentary on *sapta-svasṛḥ* in *RV.*, X. 5.5). The seven tongues of Agni are also mentioned in the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*, XVII. 79, and the names of each are provided by the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, I. 2.4:

Kālī karālī ca manojavā ca sulohitā yā ca sudhūmravarṇā,
Sphuliṅginī viśvarūpī ca lelāyamānā iti saptajihvāḥ.

Incidently, as noted also in Ch. II, the authenticity of the Upanisadic stanza has sometimes been doubted; see Belvalkar and Ranade, *The Creative Period*, p. 94.

[269] Dhavalikar, *op, cit.*, *BDCRI*, XXI, p. 21, quoting Dikshit, *The Mother Goddess*, p. 122.

[270] See, *e.g.*, Wheeler. *The Indus Civilization*, p. 138; Sullivan, Herbert P., "A Re-examination of the Religion of the Indus Civilization," *HR*, 4, 1964, pp. 115-6; Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, pp. 19 ff.. See also above, Ch. II,

[271] This is presumed by Marshall and Mackay whose views have been referred to above see also Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 168; Viennot, *Le Culte de l'arbre dans l'Inde ancienne*, p. 13; Sullivan, *op. cit.*, *HR*, 4, pp. 117-8; Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age*, p. 186; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 23-4. Almost all the authorities cited above also treat the kneeling worshipper on the left as well as the seven standing figures below as females.

[272] See Coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, p. 64 and fn. 2; *Yakṣas*, I, pp. 32 ff.; II, p. 11; cf. also Marshall (ed.). *MIC*, I, p. 64.

[273] Gordon also regards the figure framed by the branches of the *pīpal* tree as male and the seven figures in a row in the lower ground as females, probably priestesses; see Gordon, *The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture*, p. 68.

[274] See, *e.g.*, the interpretation of Heras and Ramchandran referred to in Dhavalikar, *op. cit.*, *BDCRI*, XXI, p. 23. Wheeler seems to be uncertain whether the deity in the tree and the seven "votaries" or "ministrants" below are male or female; see *The Indus Civilization*, p. 105.

There are even more serious difficulties in reading aspects of Vedic belief and ritual in the remains of the Indus Valley culture, for all available evidence indicates that the two were intrinsically alien to each other. This was clearly demonstrated by Marshall through a fairly detailed analysis and is now generally accepted.[278] In fact, the present consensus often favours the opinion that the Vedic Indo-Aryans were partly or largely responsible for the destruction of the Indus Valley cities.[279] The only way in which an element of one of these cultures may be read into the other is on the assumption that either such an element is extraneous to both and borrowed from a common source, or that it was native to one and borrowed by the other.[280] Since neither the representation on the Mohenjodaro seal under reference on the one hand, nor the grouping into seven of the rivers, mothers, or the rays or flames of the Sun and Fire-god, *etc.*, in the

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[275] Sullivan, *op. cit.*, *HR*, 4, pp. 117-8, fn. 12.

[276] Dhavalikar, *op. cit.*, *BDCRI*, XXI, p. 22.

[277] See Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, III, pl. CXVIII. 7; for the description of the seal impression, see *ibid.*, II, p. 393.

[278] See Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 107 ff., esp. 110-2. The suggestion made by some scholars that the Vedic Aryans may have been the authors of the Indus Valley culture or at least may heve formed an important part of the populace in those days and contributed their share to the evolution of this culture is exceptional and not generally accepted; see Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age*, pp. 193-5; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 24. The discovery of the bones of domesticated horse from Surkotada, a slightly later Indus Valley culture site in Gujarat (see Sharma, A.K., "Evidence of Horse from the Harappan Settlement at Surkotada," *Purātattva*, No. 7, 1974, pp. 75-6), does not substantially alter the fact of marked contrast between the Vedic and the Indus Valley Culture, as demonstrated by Marshall. S.R. Rao's recent attempts to read Vedic Sanskrit in the Indus Valley seal inscriptions (see his *The Decipherment of the Indus Script*) have not yet received general acceptance.

[279] See, *e.g.*, Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, pp. 126 ff., esp. 131-3; Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, pp. 262-5; Gordon, *The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture*, pp. 77 ff., esp. 80, 93 ff.; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 28, 29-30; Allchin, Bridget and Raymond, *The Birth of Indian Civilization*, pp. 143-4, 152 ff. The counter theory that the Harappa culture disintegrated owing to constant flooding (see Wheeler, *op. cit.*, pp. 7 ff., 127 ff. and references cited there), is equally unfavourable to the theory that the culture was in any way connected with the Aryans.

[280] A good illustration is provided by the case of Rudra-Śiva. While Rudra is a well known Vedic deity and a certain continuity of his complex history is easily traceable up to the later Rudra-Śiva of epic-Purāṇic myths and the exclusive Śivaite sects, Marshall's conjecture that an analogous god was worshipped by the people of Indus Valley culture has come to be almost universally endorsed, even by scholars who otherwise, exercise extreme caution in using material objects like seals, terracottas, *etc.*, in reconstructing the religious beliefs and practices of the Indus Valley people. Although the common practice, generally following Marshall, is to cite various aspects of the conception of Rudra-Śiva in the epics and the *Purāṇas. e.g.*, Śiva as *Mahā-yogī*, as *Paśupati*, as *Ūrdhvaretas*, as having three eyes, or many faces or *triśūla* as his emblem, *etc.*, which appear to be anticipated in some seals and similar objects of the Indus Valley culture, the real reason for the overwhelming approval of Marshall's hypothesis is apparently the peculiar growth of Rudra-Śiva in the Vedic religion itself. It seems very easy to demonstrate that the concept of Rudra in the Vedic thought and the position occupied by him in the Vedic pantheon, myths and rites are such that mark him completely out from the rest of the gods. Thus it is often noted that, of all the Vedic gods, Rudra alone is predominantly malevolent. He is marked out from the other gods in the ritual by being assigned a different direction of the compass. It is said that he was left behind when others attained heaven through rites; he forcibly snatches his own share and those of others at the sacrifice; not only human beings but also gods are afraid of him, and he is the one chosen to punish Prajāpati for his incestuous misdemeanour—a theme which grows into the elaborate *Dakṣa-yajña-vidhvaṁsa* episode of the epics and the *Purāṇas.* He is excluded from the normal Soma offerings and receives only informal *balis.* The specific rites of Rudra-Śiva are generally of popular and inauspicious character and very different from the usual Vedic rites. The utterance of his name was to be avoided in rites, and "to be forsaken like the offerings made to Śiva" (*śiva-nirmālya kī taraha tyājya*) is still a current phrase in Hindi literature. To all this may be added the generally accepted opinion that phallic worship, which is so characteristic of Śivaism of the epic-Purāṇic times, is condemned in the *Ṛg-veda.* In fact, even before the civilization of the Indus Valley had been brought to light, Arbman had used such materials to arrive at the opinion that Rudra-Śiva may have been originally a popular cannibalistic death-demon who was later transformed by the Vedic priests into a celestial deity. But even if we do not take recourse to this extreme view and discount attempts to trace the words *Śiva* and *Rudra* to non-Vedic or Dravidic origins, it still appears undeniable, and, in fact, is the generally accepted opinion, that much of the content of the Vedic Rudra is made up of non-Vedic elements. In special cases of concepts like that of Rudra-Śiva, therefore, it should be regarded as legitimate to try to trace elements of the Vedic religion in the remains of the Indus Valley culture. For the origin and development of the concept of Rudra-Śiva and his place in the Vedic pantheon, see Macdonell, *VM*, pp. 18, 74 ff.; Arbman, *Rudra etc*; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 142 ff.; Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 102 ff.; Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age*, pp. 162-3, 203, 207, 372, 443-4; Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, p. 47; Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, pp. 2 ff., *etc.*. For brief descriptions of two special rites of Rudra, *Śūla-gava* and *Tryambaka-homa*, see Kane, *HD*, II, pt. II, pp. 831-2, 1103-5; see also below. For Marshall's hypothesis and its general approval, see Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 52 ff.; Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, p. 204; Gordon, *The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture*, p. 68; Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, pp. 89-90, 105, 109, Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 159-60; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 22-3; *etc.* Gonda, who is generally quite sceptical about such attempts nevertheless seems to feel the force of these arguments; see Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, I, pp. 7-8. Perhaps a relatively more definite dissent is of Sastri, in Bhattacharya (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, pp. 65-7.

Ṛg-vedic hymns on the other, are suggested as intruding elements in the respective cultures to which they belong, the interpretations of the type offered by Wijesekera and Dhavalikar apparently assume an identity of the Indus Valley and the early Vedic culture which is otherwise, quite difficult to uphold. In the circumstances, while it appears legitimate to look for the prototypes of the later Sapta-mātṛkās individually in the remains of Mohenjodaro and Harappa and the hymns of the *Ṛg-veda*, it is not possible to imagine that the same essential concept of Seven Divine Mothers or an exactly similar ritual involving them was familiar both to the people of the Indus Valley and the early Vedic culture and that the same provides the starting point of development of the Sapta-mātṛkās of Purāṇic tradition.

It has been seen above that the Mohenjodaro seal cited by Dhavalikar does not provide any proof that the Sapta-mātṛkās of Purāṇic tradition were already worshipped by the people of Indus Valley culture.[281] Before we comment on his attempts to find the prototypes of these deities in the hymns of the *Ṛg-veda*, a reference should be made also to the suggestions of Dikshit, whose statement is cited in support by Dhavalikar.

Dikshit does not deal specifically with the question of the origin of the Mātṛs. He expresses his opinion on the subject in the course of a discussion on the role of the stars and planets in the development of the Mother Goddess cults in Western Asia and India. In this context, he identifies the Sapta-mātṛkās of classical Hinduism with the seven Kṛttikās, and, arguing that since a close connection existed between the Kṛttikās and the Vedic deity Agni, he further imagines that the Sapta-mātṛkās must also be the same as the so-called seven mothers of Agni, "the Seven Sisters," as well as his seven tongues or rays as mentioned in the Ṛg-vedic hymns.[282] At least this appears to us to be his main inference, although Dikshit does not express himself as unambiguously as we have tried to summarise. He speaks of the motif of the Goddess multiplying herself into seven, which, according to him, was popular in Western Asia and India from very ancient times, and seems to imply, without any historical basis, that the Vedic concept of the seven Kṛttikās, the seven mothers, flames, tongues, *etc.*, of Agni are all manifestations of the same motif.[283]

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[281] See, however, below.

[282] Dikshit, *The Mother Goddess*, pp. 112 ff..

[283] As illustration of the motif of the Goddess multiplying herself into seven, Dikshit points to the seven Hat-hors of Egypt and cites the opinion of W. Max Müller in support that these seven were originally the Pleiades which were among certain nations constellations of human fate, especially ill-omened fate, and foretellers of harvest, and that this concept, especially of the zodiacal sign bull which is associated with the seven Hat-hors, may have been borrowed by the Egyptians from the Asiatics in the days of the New Empire, *i.e.*, later than 1580 B C.; see Dikshit, *op. cit.*, pp. 112, 114; Gray (ed.), *The Mythology of All Races*, XII, p. 40. Inasmuch as Dikshit's supposition may be imagined to be supported by the view that the ancient Indians derived their astronomical conceptions, of the Nakṣatras in general and the seven Kṛttikās in particular, from the Babylonians, it may be noted that this view is based on very insufficient grounds and is far from certain; see, for arguments in brief for and against this view, Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, I, pp. 409 ff., s.v. *Nakṣatra*, and Kane, *HD*, V, pt, I, pp. 508 ff.; also Keith, in Rapson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 140; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 490; Renou, *Vedic India*, p. 57.

The possibility that the Mātṛs may be derived from the concept of the Kṛttikās is separately discussed below. But it may be stated here that Dikshit, in his frequently imaginative style, accepts equations amongst the Vedic and other Indian concepts of later age which have little evidence to support them. Also, generally speaking, he leaves no margin for the possibility that a religious concept in later Hinduism, which is presented in a Vedic brahmanical garb, may be essentially of extra-Vedic origin. In the present context, beyond the common number seven, no definite equation can be established, in our opinion, between the so-called seven mothers of Agni and his seven tongues or rays, despite the complex correspondences frequently present in the Ṛg-vedic thought. In view of the facts that the Ṛg-vedic hymns often depict Agni as present in or born of the Waters[284] and the latter as goddesses and mothers,[285] and also, as we have seen, that the seven mothers are at times specifically identified as the seven rivers, it is logical to suggest that the reference to the "Seven Mothers" of Agni is to these Waters or rivers. Again, even if it is accepted for the sake of argument that a clear correspondence exists between the seven rays of the Sun and the seven rays, flames or tongues of Agni on the one hand and the seven Kṛttikās on the other,[286] still it appears to us too far fetched to imagine that Agni, who is called *Kumāra* in the Vedic hymns, is the real prototype of Kumāra-Kārttikeya of the epic Purāṇic pantheon, and that the relationship between Skanda and the Mātṛs is only another form of the ancient Vedic relationship between the Fire-god and the stars of the Pleiades constellation.[287] The origin of the god Skanda-Kārttikeya is obscure, but the available evidence seems to suggest that he is of non-Aryan origin, and probably several allied god-concepts of un-brahmanical folk origins combined to develop the complex character of Skanda-Kārttikeya of the epic-Purāṇic tradition.[288]

Inasmuch as the hymns of the *Ṛg-veda* speak of the *Sapta-mātaraḥ*, whether in the form of the river-goddesses or as mothers of Agni, or as the seven mothers regulating the preparation of the Soma juice, there may always be a temptation to find in these expressions some suggestion of the Sapta-mātṛkās of Purāṇic tradition. As it is suggested above, so far as the concept of the Sapta-mātṛkās is concerned, the Mātṛs do appear to have been later moulded according to Vedic concepts in the process of their incorporation into the brahmanical pantheon. But any attempt to find the clear prototypes of the Mātṛs in the *Sapta-mātaraḥ* of the *Ṛg-veda* is wholly inadmissible, for the simple reason that these so-called mothers of Agni or Soma, *etc.*, have nothing of the character of the Mātṛs as reflected in classical Sanskrit literature. The Mātṛs of classical Sanskrit literature, as we have seen, appear essentially as a group of unbrahmanical, anonymous deities of indefinite number and mainly demoniacal nature, and even when names were given to them or their number was sought to be fixed, there was no unanimity about it. The so-called Sapta-mātṛkās of the *Purāṇas*, iconographic texts and archaeology were no doubt popular divinities in the brahmanical tradition, but in that form, *i.e.*, as personified energies of seven different gods, Brahmā, *etc.*, they are certainly not anticipated in the *Ṛg-veda* or even in the later Vedic literature. Any attempt at finding the Mātṛs in the Vedic religion is bound to be defeated if these deities are indiscriminately regarded as wholly identical with the traditional Sapta-mātṛkās, counted as Brāhmī, *etc.*, and if their essential nature as ferocious and cruel beings is overlooked.

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[284] See Macdonell; *VM*, pp. 91-2; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 155-6.

[285] See Macdonell, *VM*, pp. 85-6; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 141-2.

[286] See Dikshit, *The Mother Goddess*, pp. 112-3, 121-2.

[287] *Ibid.*, pp. 112-3, 117; cf. also Mukhopadhyay, Manmatha, "Some Notes on Skanda-Kārttikeya," *IHQ*, VII, 1931, p. 316.

[288] For the origin and development of the concept of Skanda-Kārttikeya, see Jacobi, "Brahmanism," *ERE*, 2, p. 807; Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śavism, etc.*, pp. 150-1; Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 227 ff.; Mukhopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, *IHQ*, VII, 1931, pp. 309 ff.; Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 361 ff.; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 314; Venkataraman, K.R., "Skanda Cult in South India," in Bhattacharya (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, pp. 309 ff.

Similar objections would seem to apply to a casual suggestion by Barth that the cult of the *Tisro-devīḥ* in the *Veda* is very similar to that of the Mātṛs or Mahā-mātṛs.[289] The group nature of this Ṛg-vedic trio, Iḍā, Sarasvatī and Bhāratī, or Iḷā, Sarasvatī and Mahī, is no doubt clear, as also is their prominent position as deities regularly invoked in the *Āpri-sūktas*.[290] However, apart from the difficulty created by the number three, there seems nothing in the nature of these deities to bring them close to the Mātṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition. At least two of the three deities, Iḍā and Mahī, appear to be products of ritualistic elaboration by priests. Iḍā literally "nourishment," is the personification of the offering of milk and butter, thus representing plenty derived from the cow, with which she is frequently connected in the *Brāhmaṇas* and is synonymous in the *Naighaṇṭuka*.[291] Mahī also may be regarded as a goddess of similar nature.[292] Bhāratī, according to Keith, must refer to the lady of the Bharatas who dwelt on the banks of the Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī and is probably the personification of the offerings made by them.[293] It is only the well known river-goddess Sarasvatī who betrays some warlike character, but this is never prominent and cannot be said to form the central aspect of the goddess' personality.[294] There is also nothing in the ritual implied in the *Āpri-sūktas* to suggest a sinister aspect of the *Tisro-devīḥ*.[295]

Arbman's view, that an explanation of the "Mothers" (*i.e.*, the Mātṛs of the epic-Purāṇic tradition) may be obtained in the *Tryambaka* title of Rudra and the Tryambaka ritual, may be regarded as relatively less open to objection.[296] Rudra seems to be referred to as *Tryambaka* already in the *Ṛg-veda*[297] and the epithet is repeated in the later Vedic texts which also describe the special rite in honour of Rudra called *Tryambaka-homa*.[298] In this rite, the offerings are made both for Rudra and his "sister" Ambikā[299] and the god is requested to retire to Mūjavant mountain.[300] As described in the *Brāhmaṇas* and other later ritual texts, the essential elements of the rite of *Tryambaka-homa* are as follows:[301] The *adhvaryu* first prepares on the *gārhapatya* fire as many cakes as the *yajamāna* has descendants, with an additional cake for the unborn ones. Then, taking a fire-brand from the *dakṣiṇa* fire, he, accompanied by other priests, the *yajamāna* and his relatives, carries the cakes in a dish to a place towards the north-east.[302] The fire-brand is deposited in a spot where four roads meet and over which the usual purifying rites have been performed. Here then, at the cross-roads, a portion cut off from each cake, except the additional one, is offered to Rudra and his sister Ambikā, the presumption being that thereby the *yajamāna* and his descendants are delivered from Rudra's power.[303] The additional cake is buried on a mole-hill or a heap of earth dug up by rats, which is supposed to free the unborn descendants from Rudra's power. Returning from the heap, the *yajamāna*, his wife, children and other ladies in the family go around the fire thrice from right to left, *i.e.*, in an anti-clockwise direction, as in the *pitṛ-yajña*, striking their thighs in a specified way. There is an interesting prescription that unmarried daughters of the *yajamāna*, who are desirous of husbands, should go around the fire three times each in the anti-clockwise and clockwise direction.[304] The *yajamāna*

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[289] Barth, *The Religions of India*, p. 202, fn. 1. Barth gives the impression that the suggestion was favoured by Weber, which appears to us to be inaccurate; see below, for examination of Weber's suggestions, and for another suggestion contained in a statement of Barth elsewhere.

[290] For the *Āprī-sūktas*, and the deities invoked in them, See Max Müller's *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature etc.*, pp. 463-7; with some difference; the three goddesses are generally invoked in the eight verse of each *Āprī-Sūkta*. See also Potdar, K.R., "Āprī Hymns in the *Ṛg-veda*," *JUB*, XIV, pp. 26 ff., XV, pp. 29ff.

[291] See Macdonell, *VM*, p. 124; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 173, 200.

[292] See Keith, *RPVU*, p. 173.

[293] *Ibid.*, pp. 173, 200.

[294] For the conception of the goddess Sarasvatī in the Vedic religion, see Macdonell, *VM*. pp. 86 ff.; Keith; *RPVU*, pp. 172 ff.. The mighty, war-like character of this goddess is probably best expressed in *RV*, VI. 61. See also Potdar, *op. cit.*, *JUB*, XV., p. 30-3 for a discussion of the character of *Tisro-devīḥ* as Āprī deities.

[295] See Potdar, *op. cit.*, *JUB*, XV, pp., where the ritual implied in the Āprī Hymns has been discussed.

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296. Arbman, *Rudra, etc.*, pp. 295 ff.
297. *RV*, VII. 59. 12. Grassmann regards this verse, as also *RV*, VII. 59. 7 and 8, as later additions; see *RV*, tr. Grassmann, vol. I, p. 555.
298. *TS*, I.8.6; *VS*, III. 57-63; *TB*, I.6.10; *ŚB*, II. 6.2. For other references to this rite in the ritual texts, see Arbman, *Rudra, etc.*, p. 295, fn. 3, and *TS*, tr. Keith, pt. I, p. 118, fn. 1. Arbman deals with the rite in ch. 3 of his book and it is briefly described in Kane, *HD*, II, pt. II, pp. 1103-5.
299. *TT*, I.8.6;

    . . . *eṣa te rudra bhāgaḥ saha svasrā'mbikayā taṁ juṣasva* . . .

    Similarly in *VS*, III. 57a.
300. *TS*, I. 8.6:

    . . . *te nāvasena paro mūjavato'tīhi* . . .;

    VS, III. 61:

    Etatte rudrāvasaṁ tena paro mūjavato'tīhi.
301. For the description of the rite, see Kane, *HD*, II, pt. II, pp. 1103-5; also Devasthali, *Religion and Mythology of the Brāhmaṇas*, pp. 102-3.
302. A detail at this stage, omitted here is that one cake is laid down on the earth dug out by moles or rats with the words: "the mole (or rat) is thy beast, O Rudra; rejoice in it" (*Ākhuste rudra paśustaṁ juṣasva*; *TS*, I.8.6; cf. *VS*, III. 57), or if one has an enemy, one may think of him and offer that cake with the words "that is thy beast;" see Kane, *HD*, II, pt. II, p. 1104.
303. This offering is accompanied by the utterance of *mantra IS*, I. 8.6, quoted above; see Kane, *HD*., II, pt. II, p. 1104.
304. The clue to this is in the use of the epithet *pativedanam* for Rudra in *VS*, III. 60b:

    Tryambakaṁ yajāmahe sugandhiṁ pativedanam.

(Contd.)

पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय

then throws up high in the air the portions of the cake that remain and either catches them in his hands one after the other or touches them when they have fallen on the ground. This act is supposed to cut Rudra's darts from his body. The cakes are then put in two baskets and hung from the two ends of a bamboo pole which is afterwards fastened to a tree-trunk or an ant-hill towards the north in such a way that a cow or bull cannot reach it. Rudra is then requested to retire to Mūjavant mountain. Finally, the priests and the *yajamāna* return without looking back and touch water for purification. While the various acts of the rite are performed, suitable Vedic *mantras* are also recited.

Full of magical elements, the rite of *Tryambaka-homa* is undoubtedly of a popular, inauspicious kind, very different from the normal Vedic sacrifices.[305] The malevolent nature of Rudra is transparent enough in the description of the rite which is especially meant for him. But certain *Brāhmaṇa* passages and the commentators of the *Yajur-veda* leave no doubt also about the similar character of his so-called "sister" Ambikā. While explaining this rite, the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* makes the statement: "...His sister Ambikā is the autumn; with her he smites (or kills),"[306] and both the commentators, of the *Vājasaneyi* and the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, elaborate that Ambikā kills by taking the form of autumn and producing diseases, *etc.*[307] It is also significant that the joint offering to Rudra and Ambikā was supposed to be made away from the house, at the crossroads.

Arbman emphasized the popular nature of the rite and the malevolent nature of the goddess associated with Rudra.[308] He understood *Tryambaka* in the sense of one accompanied by three mothers (*ambāḥ, ambikāḥ*), *i.e.*, goddesses.[309] Obviously presuming

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Explaining the word, the commentary says:

> *Yajamānasambandhinyaḥ kumāryo'pi pūrvoktapuruṣavaduttareṇa tryambakamantreṇāgniṁ triḥ pariyanti. Tryambakaṁ yajāmahe kīdṛśaṁ pativedanaṁ patiṁ vedayatīti taṁ bharturlambhayitāraṁ vidlṛ lābhe . . . .*

See also Kane, *HD*, II, p. 1104.

305. Cf. Devasthali, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-3.

306. *TB*, I.6. 10:

> . . . *Śaradvā asyāmbikā svasā. Tayā va eṣa hinasti . . . .*

307. The commentary explains the mention of "sister Ambikā in the joint offering to her and Rudra in *VS*, III. 57 as:

> *Ambikā ha vai nāmāsya svasā tayāsyaiṣa saha bhāga iti. Yo'yaṁ rudrākhyaḥ krūro devastasya virodhinaṁ hantumichā bhavati tadānayā bhaginyā krūradevatayā sādhanabhūtaya taṁ hinasti. Sā cāmbikā śaradrūpaṁ prāpya jarādikamutpādya taṁ virodhinaṁ hanti . . . .*

Similarly, the commentary on *TS*, I. 8.6 says about Ambikā:

> *Śaratkālo hi pīnasajvarādyutpādanena hiṁsakastadvadiyamambikā hiṁsikā. Tataḥ śaradityucyate. Eṣa rudrastayaiva sahāyabhūtayā prāṇinaṁ hinasti. . . . .*

308. Arbman, *Rudra etc.*, pp. 295 ff.

309. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

the so-called "sister" Ambikā as identical, at least in name and nature, with the *ambāḥ* or *ambikāḥ* implied in the title *Tryambaka*, Arbman supposed that these must be the same as the cruel, demoniacal Mātṛs of the epic, *etc.*[310]

The supposition of Arbman carries considerable force, especially in view of the close association of the Mātṛs with Śiva in epic and Purāṇic Hinduism, and the suggestion in the epic passages of a great, if obscure, antiquity of these divinities. It must be emphasized, however, that Arbman's view, in the present state of our knowledge, is no more than a good supposition, perhaps more satisfactory than some others of its kind but still far from being certain. The mention of a goddess Ambikā in relation to Rudra in the Vedic texts may be very significant for the history of the Devī or Śakti cult in India,[311] but the association of Rudra with a group of Ambikās as prototypes of the later Mātṛs should be regarded as no more than a possibility, for Arbman's statement that the name *Tryambaka* implied one associated with three mothers or three goddesses, although highly plausible, is not universally accepted.[312] Elsewhere in the *Yajur-veda* when, in the ritual of the Aśvamedha sacrifice, the chief queen is required to lie down with the slain horse and utter "O Ambā, O Ambikā, O Ambālikā! No one leadeth me, *etc.*,"[313] there is no indication that three divinities are meant or that they have any connection with the goddess Ambikā or with Rudra's *Tryambaka* title.[314]

The suggestion sometimes put forward that the Mātṛs may be derived from the concept of the Kṛttikās must be regarded as inspired by the popular epic and Purāṇic myth of the Kṛttikās nursing the child god Kārttikeya.[315] Since the Mātṛs are also closely connected with Skanda-Kārttikeya, there may always be a suspicion that they were originally the same as the Kṛttikās.

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[310] *Ibid.*, p. 296. For a somewhat similar inference drawn by Kosambi see beolw.

[311] See above, Ch. II.

[312] The meaning of *Tryambaka* as "one having (or being associated with) three mothers" would seem to be generally supported by most scholars; cf. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 74; Hopkins *EM*, p. 220 and fn. 1; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 149. Grassmann also understands the word *Tryambaka* in the sense of one having three mothers, and suggests comparison with *trimātā* in *RV*, III. 56. 5; see *RV*, tr. Grassmann, vol. I, p. 555; *Wörterbuch zum Ṛig-veda* p. 561. However, the agreement seems to extend only to the bare translation of the term, and there is difference of opinion as to the origin of the title and its significance. For the traditional view, see, besides Hopkins cited above, Barth, *The Religions of India*, p. 161 and fn. 1.

[313] *TS*, VII. 4.19; see also *ŚB*, XIII. 2.8.3.

[314] See *ŚB*, tr. Eggeling, *SBE*, XLIV, pp. 321-2, *TS*, tr. Keith, pt. 2, p. 615, fn. 5.

[315] Dikshit's opinion has already been cited, but he arrives at the equation Kṛttikās=Mātṛs in a somewhat different and roundabout way. Perhaps the most representative opinion of this type, though very briefly expressed, is of Patil; see Patil, "Sapta-mātṛkās or the Seven Mothers from Besnagar," *PIHC*, XII, 1949, (50), pp. 109 ff., esp. 111-2. While discussing Roman influence on the classical Indian art, Goetz points to a new wave of "light cults" and, referring to the growing worship of Kārttikeya, quotes Patil in support of the close association of this god with the Mātṛkās who may be the stars of the Pleiades constellation; see Goetz, "Imperial Rome and the Genesis of Classic Indian Art," *EW*, n.s., X, no. 4, 1959, pp. 262 and 268, fn. 69. See also Yaduvanshi, *Śaiva Mata*, pp. 95-6, 141, and cf. Mukhopadhyay, "Some Notes on Skanda-Kārttikeya," *IHQ*, VII, 1931, pp. 316-7.

The Kṛttikās appear as a prominent constellation closely associated with Agni in the texts of the later Vedic period.[316] Their association with the Fire-god continues throughout the history of Indian culture[317] and, in fact, it is quite probable that the myth of Skanda-Karttikeya as son of Agni and the Kṛttikās in the *Mahābhārata* is already influenced by Vedic concepts.[318] The Kṛttikās were uniformly regarded as six in the classical Sanskrit literature[319] and in this form are taken to explain the name and the six faces of Kārttikeya,[320] but there are earlier traditions that they were counted as seven[321] and it appears that they were sometimes also imagined as of a very large and indefinite number.[322] An association with birth and new-born children is also brought

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316. See Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index, etc.*, I, pp. 413, 415, s.v. *Nakṣatra*; Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, pp. 499, 501, 507; Dikshit, *The Mother Goddess*, pp. 113. 117-8. An instance of the close connection of the Kṛttikās with Agni may be seen in *ŚB*, II. 1.2.1:
Kṛttikāsvagnī'ādadhīta. Etā vā'gninakṣatraṁ yatkṛttikāstadvai
saloma yo'gninakṣatre'gnī ādadhātai tasmātkṛttikāsvādadhīta.
317. See Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 105-6; Mukhopadhyay, op. cit., *IHO*, VII. 1931, p. 317: Shastri, *India as seen in the Bṛhatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihira*, p. 142; also *Sabdakalpadruma*, II, p. 176, s.v. *Kṛttikā*; Monier-Williams, *SED*, p. 304, s. v. *Kṛttikā*. The Kṛttikās are called *Vahni-daivata* in the *Mahābhārata*; see *Mbh.*, I.213.78; III.219.11; cf. also *ibid.*, IX.43.10.
318. Cf. Hopkins, *EM*, p. 229; Mukhopadhyay, *op. cit.*, *IHQ*, VIII, 1931, p. 316.
319. See Monier-Williams, *SED*, p. 304, s. v. *Kṛttikā*; *ERE*, 2, p. 807.
320. It has been suggested that the name *Kārttikeya* of the god was probably derived not directly from that of his so-called mothers, the Kṛttikās, but from *Kārttika*, the first month of autumn when, on the cessation of the monsoon, the roads became practicable and kings were wont to set out on war expeditions; see Jacobi in *ERE.*, 2, p. 807. Hopkins, however, preferred to accept the traditional derivation from *Kṛttikā*, since these stars were imagined as regents of war and governed the month when wars usually began in ancient India; see Hopkins, *EM*, p. 230.
321. Several later Vedic texts count the Kṛttikās as seven and give their names as Ambā, Dulā, Nitatni, Abhrayanti, Meghayantī, Varṣayantī and Cupuṇīkā; see *TS*, IV.4.5; *TB*, III.1.4, 1; for other references and some variations in names, see Macdonell and Keith, *Vadic Index, etc.*, I, p. 415, fn. 68; *TS*, tr. Keith, pt .2, p. 346, fn. 2. Several of the above names suggest association with clouds and rain. The description of the Kṛttikās as *Sapta-śīrṣābha nakṣatra* in *Mbh.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., III.230.11, has been rejected in the Cr. edn. and the accepted reading describes this constellation as *Śakaṭākāra*; see *Mbh.*, III.219.11.
322. Cf. *SB* II.1.2.2:
Ekaṁ dve trīṇī catvārīti vā anyāni nakṣatrāṇyathaitā eva bhūyiṣṭhā yat kṛttikāstadbhūmānamevaitadupaiti. Tasmātkṛttikāsvādadhīta. ……

A large and indefinite number of this constellation is also suggested by the name *Bahulā* by which it is referred in Pāṇini, IV.3.34 and *AK*, NSP. edn., p. 231, 1. 2733. Cf. also the expression *Tataśca prāpte jyeṣṭhāmūlīye māsi bahulāsu, etc., in the Harṣacarita* and the commentator's equation of *bahulasu* with *kṛttikāsu*; *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 4th *Ucchvāsa*, p. 6; *ibid.*, ed. Führer, p. 183. The masculine form of this name, *i.e. Bahula* is given to Agni (see commentary on *AK*, NSP. edn., p. 231, line 2733), and Skanda-Kārttikeya is sometimes called *Bāhuleya*; see *AK*, NSP. edn., p. 8. 1.79.

out in their relationship with the child Skanda as his mothers.[323] The *Mahābhārata* also suggests a war-like character both of the Kṛttikās and their presiding deity Agni.[324]

It is not improbable, therefore, that the Mātṛs may be ultimately derived from the concept of the Kṛttikās. Unfortunately, however, there is no definite evidence to prove it. Firstly, even though the Kṛttikās occupy a prominent place in the basic *Śrauta* rite of the consecration of sacred fire (*Agnyādhāna*) and invariably head the list of the Nakṣatras in the Vedic literature,[325] it does not seem to be possible to reconstruct a popular cult of this constellation in the Vedic and pre-epic times. Secondly, as we have seen, the Skanda-myths in the *Mahābhārata*, which are probably our earliest sources where the Māṛts of later Hinduism are clearly recognizable and which describe these deities in such a detailed, if also confused manner, do not warrant the derivation of the "Mothers" from a specific group like the Kṛttikās. In these myths, the Kṛttikās appear incidentally as "Mothers" and assume significance only in relation to Skanda, especially in relation to his six faces.

Perhaps the suggestion of a possible early relationship of the Mātṛs with the Kṛttikās may be regarded as more acceptable in another form. Although the Mātṛs do not seem to have been originally astral figures as shown by their names, whether in the longer lists in the epic and the *Purāṇas* or in the shorter lists in these sources, including the popular traditional Sapta-or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās,[326] it is possible to imagine that astral cults influenced their growth and development.

The origin and development of the astral cults in India is obscure. The old theory of Hillebrandt that a lunar cult formed the basis of the Ṛg-vedic rites and myths is all but abandoned,[327] but moon and stars did play an important role in the life and thought of the Vedic people,[328] and there is also evidence that the knowledge of the Vedic Aryans about astronomy was fairly advanced, if not fully organised.[329] The stars seem to have played some part also in the eschatological ideas of the Vedic people.[330] The word *Nakṣatra*, generally in the sense of star, appears already in the hymns of the *Ṛg-veda*, and, in the later Vedic period, it seems to be technically used in the sense of the stations of the moon.[331] Mythologically, in this period, the Nakṣatras are conceived of as females and wives of Soma, identified with moon.[332] However, in spite of the fact that some later Vedic texts describe a *Nakṣatreṣṭi*,[333] there is no clear evidence that the worship of the Nakṣatras personified as female deities played any significant part in the Vedic ritual.[334] But a star-cult, including the cult of the female Nakṣatras, must have been more popular than the Vedic leterature seems to reveal, for, as pointed out by Hopkins, the epic mythology appears to have been conspicuously affected by such a clut.[335]

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[323] A certain relationship of the Kṛttikās with birth and new-born children can also be inferred from the fact that in the later Vedic and especially the post-Vedic period, the Nakṣatra of a child's birth was supposed to be of great significance and in certain rites in the ceremonies relating to birth, offerings were prescribed, among others, also to the Nakṣatra of that day and the god of that Nakṣatra; see Kane, *HD*, II, pt. I, pp. 246 ff., V, pt. I, pp. 521 ff., esp. 525: 528 ff.; also Keith, *RPVU*, p. 368.

[324] See Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 105-6, 230.

[325] See Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, pp. 501, 506-7. For the place of the Kṛttikās in the rite of *Agnyādhāna*, see *ŚB*, II.1.2.1-5. A description of the rite is given in Kane, *HD*, II, pt. II, pp. 986 ff.

[326] Cf. Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 415, fn. 2, on Skanda's Grahas, both male and female.

[327] See Macdonell, *VM*, p. 113; Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, pp. 114 ff.; Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*, pp. 171 ff., esp. 175-8., Keith, *RPVU*, p. 171; *TS*, tr. Keith, pt. I, p. cxx; Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, p. 14; Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, p. 38, fn. 1, *etc.* A very brief survey of Hillebrandt's theory may be seen in Dandekar, R.N., "Vedic Religion and Mythology: A Survey of the Work of Some Western Scholars," *JUP*, XXI, 1965, pp. 24-5.

[328] See Hopkins, "Festivals and Fasts (Hindu): The Vedic Calendar," *ERE*, 5, p. 871; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 316; Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, pp. 506-7, 523 ff.; Renou, *Vedic India*, p. 49; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 489-90; *etc.*

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[329] See Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, chs. XIV, XV, esp. pp. 477 ff., 488 ff. The arguments by Kane may not be uniformly objective, but he has collected enough materials at one place to convince us that the astronomical knowledge of Vedic Indians must have been fairly advanced. See also Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index, etc.*, I, pp. 409 ff., s.v. *Nakṣatra*; Rapson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of India*, I, pp. 139-40; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 489-90; Apte, *Social and Religious Life in the Gṛhyā-sūtras*, pp. 155 ff.

[330] The stars are sometimes imagined in the Vedic thought as the souls of the virtuous dead; see Barth, *The Religions of India*, p. 23; Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 204; Macdonell, *VM*, p. 167. Commenting on *TS*, V. 4. 1.3-4:

Sukṛtāṁ vā etāni jyotīṁṣi yannakṣatrāṇi tānyevā' 'pnotyatho
anūkāśamevaitāni jyotīṁṣi kurute suvargasya lokasyānukhyatyai,

Sāyaṇa says:

Ye śobhanaṁ śāstravihitaṁ karma kurvanti te sukṛtinaḥ,
Teṣāmetāni divi dṛśyamānāni nakṣatrarūpāṇi jyotīṁṣi. Te
hi puṇyakṛtaḥ svargaṁ gatvā bhāsamānavigrahāstānyāpnuvanti.
Ata eva tadupadhānena tedīyāni jyotīṁṣi prāpnuvanti. Api
caitāni nakṣatrajyotīṁṣyanu tenopadhānena kiṁcitprakāśam
karoti. Sa ca prakāśaḥ svargalokāvirbhāya saṁpadyate.

(See Sāyaṇa's commentary on *TS*, IV. 4.11; *ASS*, no. 42, p. 2092). See also *ŚB*, VI. 5.4.8:

...tāni ha tāni nakṣatrāṇyeva nakṣatrāṇi vai janayo ye hi
janāḥ puṇyakṛtaḥ svargaṁ lokaṁ yanti teṣāmetāni jyotīṁṣi
nakṣatrairevaināmetatpacati.

Cf. Griffith's note on the reference to the Fathers decorating the heaven with stars, in *RV*, X. 68.11; see *RV*, tr. Griffith, vol. II, p. 481. In any case, the identification of the Saptarṣis as the stars of the constellation of Ursa Major was an established concept in the Vedic thought; see Macdonell, *VM*, p. 167; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 201 and fn. 9, 416.

[331] See Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index, etc.*, pp. 409 ff., s.v. *Nakṣatra*; Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, pp. 495 ff.

[332] See Macdonell, *VM*, p. 112; Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index, etc.*, I, p. 410.

[333] *TB*, III. 1; *BŚS*, 28.3 and 4; for the text and English translation of the former, see Dumont, Paul-Emile, "The *Iṣṭis* to the Nakṣatras...in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*," *PAPS*, 98, no. 3, 1954, pp. 204 ff. *Atharva-veda Pariśiṣṭa*, I is a *Nakṣatra-kalpa*. See also Keith, *RPVU*, p. 201, and Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, pp. 505-7; pt. II, pp. 792 ff.

[334] Cf. Keith, *RPVU*, p. 201; Renou, *Vedic India.*, p. 74.

[335] Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 52-3. For the inclusion of the Nakṣatra deities in brahmanical rites in the post-Vedic times, or for special rites of Nakṣatras in general or particular Nakṣatras, see Keith, *RPVU*, p. 201, fn. 2; Apte, *Social and Religious Life in the Gṛhya-ūtras*, pp. 234-5; Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, pp. 792 ff., where the rites of *Nakṣatra-snāna* and *Puṣya-snāna* are described; see also Shastri, *India, as seen in the Bṛhatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihira*, pp. 167-8.

In the present context, it is worth remarking that even though diverse and very obscure groups of goddesses are associated with Skanda in the myths of his birth in the *Mahābhārata*, and many of them are also labelled as Mātṛs or *Mātaraḥ* in different contexts, at least some, besides the Kṛttikās, are clearly identifiable as astral figures. Such are the stars Dhaniṣṭhā, Rohiṇī, etc., as well as Abhijit, whose position is said to have been assigned by Skanda to the Kṛttikās. Although, in the particular context where they are introduced, none of the above Nakṣatras is called mother or mother of Skanda, their motherhood is nevertheless implied in the myth. Similarly, even though the Skanda myth in the *Mahābhārata* does not clearly allude to the astral nature of the wives of the seers, this can be safely inferred because there are some indications that already in the Vedic thought dead ancestors were sometimes conceived of as transformed into stars and constellations, and, in post-Vedic thought, the Saptarṣis in astronomy are regularly understood as stars of the constellation of Ursa Major. In any case, some versions of the myth of Skanda's birth render the six Kṛttikās as six of the seven wives of the Saptarṣis, who, when Svāhā assumed their forms to woo her own infatuated husband Agni, were supposed to have fallen from their status and consequently to have been assigned the position of a constellation.[336] This is clearly a skillful adaptation of the ancient Vedic belief that the Kṛttikās were the wives of the seven Ṛsis but that they were for some reason prevented from cohabiting with their husbands and thus it was that while the seven Bears, *i.e.*, the Saptarṣis, rose in the north, the Kṛttikās did so in the east.[337]

A close association with astral figures, named or implied, in the myths of the birth of Skanda in the *Mahābhārata*, therefore, strongly suggests the possibility that the concept and cult of the Mātṛs were influenced by astral ideas. Such a possibility finds support also from another consideration. Although in the evolved astrological ideas in the later Vedic and post-Vedic periods, the Nakṣatras, in different positions and varying conjunctions with the planets, tended to be divided for the purposes of ceremonial acts into auspicious and inauspicious,[328] it appears that a markedly malevolent nature was attributed to them from the very beginning of their conception. This does not, of course, seem to be clearly suggested in the *Iṣṭi* to the Nakṣatras described in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* and the *Baudhāyana Śrauta-sūtra*, except perhaps in the division of the 28

[336] See *ERE*, 2, p. 807.

[337] *ŚB*, II. 1.2.4:

> *Atha yasmānna kṛttikāsvādadhīta 'rkṣānāṁ vā' etā agre patnya āsuḥ*
> *sapta 'ṛṣīnu ha sma vai pura'rkṣā ityācakṣate tā mithunena vyārdhyantāmī*
> *hyuttarāhi sapta'ṛṣaya udyanti pura etā aśamiva vai tadyo mithunena*
> *vyṛddhaḥ sa nenmithunena vyṛdhyā'iti tasmānna kṛttikāsvādadhīta.*

See also *ŚB*, tr. Eggeling, *SBE*, XII, pp. 282-3. The context is the establishment of the fire in the rite of *Agnyādhāna*, and amongst several arguments as to why it must be established under the Kṛttikās, the above statement is introduced to indicate why it may not be so done.

[338] See Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, pp. 524-5, 528 ff..

asterisms into the Deva-Nakṣatras and Yama-nakṣatras.[339] But a popular myth about the Nakṣatras in the texts of the later Vedic period clearly paints a malignant picture of them. According to this myth, as referred to in the *Taittirīya Saṁhita*, Prajāpati gave his 33 daughters—all presumably astral figures—to king Soma, but as the latter associated only with Rohiṇi, the rest deserted him in anger and he was consequently afflicted with a serious illness.[340] But even if such evidence were not available, the very fact that, from as early as the Vedic times, the Nakṣatras were regarded as having a potent influence on human lives, and some of them were imagined as inauspicious in contrast to others which were auspicious, would be enough to suggest the malignant nature of these figures. In the later periods, when we hear of specific rites to a certain Nakṣatra or Nakṣatras in general, they are generally of the nature of pacificatory or *śānti* rites.[341] As already noted above, the description of the rite of Puṣyasnāna by Varāhamihira also includes the worship of the Mātṛs along with Rudra, the Grahas, Nakṣatras and a host of other deities.[342] The close association of the rites to the Nakṣatras with those to the Grahas[343] also suggests the malevolent nature of the former, since the planetary cults, in general, were of inauspicious and pacificatory nature.[344] As implied by their name, the Grahas or the planets were conceived of as beings which afflict human lives in various ways. The *Mahābhārata* often treats them as fiends and classes them with demons and ogres.[345] One of the earliest and the best descriptions of the rite of pacification of the

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[339] See Dumont, *op. cit.*, *PAPS*, 98, no. 3, 1954, p. 205; Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, p. 505. The *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, however, sometimes uses the word *puṇya nakṣatra* (*TB*, I. 5.2.1; III. 1.2.8), implying belief in evil Nakṣatras, and suggests the evil nature of Nakṣatras like Jyeṣṭhā and Mūla (see *ibid.*, III. 1.2.2-3; cf. Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, pp. 524-5). The birth of a child on the Nakṣatras like Jyeṣṭhā, Mūla, *etc.*, is regarded as very inauspicious in *AV*, VI. 110.2-3 and the whole of this hymn is prescribed by the *Kauśika Sūtra*, 46.25 to be recited in a rite of pacification for one born on an evil Nakṣatra; see Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, p. 524 and fn. 753.

[340] *TS*, II. 3.5; see also Keith, *RPVU*, p. 170.

[341] Cf. Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, pp. 792 ff.. According to the *Baudhāyana Śrauta-sūtra* (28.4), the *Iṣṭi* to the Nakṣatras is performed to drive the evil away, produce luminousness and conquer repeated dying; see Dumont, *op. cit.*, *PAPS*, 98, no 3, 1954, p. 207.

[342] The worship of the Nakṣatras and Grahas in the rite called *Rohiṇī-yoga* in the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* seems to be aimed at avoiding droughts and securing timely and adequate rain for the crops; see *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, ch. 24.

[343] In the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Khaṇḍa I, the rite of pacification of the Mātṛs (ch. 227) is followed immediately by the rite of worship of the Kṛttikās (ch. 228), *etc.*, and then by the rites to the Grahas (chs. 231-2). For the frequent mention of the Nakṣatras and the Grahas together in a Sanskrit Buddhist text, see below.

[344] See *ERE*, 12, p. 84. The Mahāyāna Buddhist text *Suvarṇa-bhāsottama-sūtra* frequently refers to the afflictions caused by the Grahas and the Nakṣatras, *etc.* (*Graha-nakṣatra-pīḍā*, *Sarva-graha-nakṣatra-janma-maraṇa-pīḍā*, *Sarva-graha-kali-kalaha-nakṣatra-janma-pīḍā*); see *Suvarṇa-bhāsottama-sūtra*, ed. Nobel, pp. 104, 107, 157, 163. See also *ibid.*, pp. 65, 93, 106, where the Grahas and the Nakṣatras are separately mentioned as evil beings causing afflictions.

[345] See *Mbh.*, VI. 73.10; 96.35-6 for references to cruel planets. The fact that the epic speaks of evil beings called Skanda-grahas, Deva-grahas, Gāndharva-grahas (see Hopkins, *EM*, p. 34), and Pitṛ-grahas (*Mbh.*, III. 219.47), easily suggests that the Grahas in their primary sense as planets were

(Contd.)

Grahas is found in the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti.*[346] Much of the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* is occupied with the potent and often evil influence of these beings, and the text frequently refers to the *Graha-śānti, Graha-yajña, etc.*.[347] Several *Purāṇas*, astrological texts and mediaeval digests describe the *Navagraha-śānti*,[348] and it is interesting to note that a detailed description of such a rite in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* almost immediately follows a similar one to the Mātṛs.[349]

It seems, therefore, safe to assume that the cult of the Mātṛs, if not itself of astral origin or derived from a cult of the Kṛttikās, was strongly influenced by astral cults at a fairly early stage of its history and, in any case, before the *Mahābhārata* assumed its present form.

Another suggestion of the origin of the Mātṛs may also be considered, that they were at first essentially dead ancestresses, and were conceived of as a group and commanded reverence in the same way as the Pitṛs. We shall examine presently some very interesting uses of the word Mātṛ in texts of the Atharva-vedic tradition, but it may be mentioned that Weber, commenting on the relevant passages of these texts and conscious that the "Mothers" presumably referred to in them might be connected with the Mātṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition, expressed the opinion that their worship may have been modelled on the lines of the various supplicatory sacrifices to the Pitṛs.[350] In support of his opinion, he pointed mainly to the offerings made to the Mātṛs in the *Ābhyudayika Śrādha*, mentioned probably for the first time in the *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra* but more frequently in the later ritual texts.[351] He also referred to a passage in the *Kauśītakī Upaniṣad* which mentions the Apsarases, called Ambā, Ambāyu, welcoming the newly

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regarded as evil beings. The demoniacal beings exercising evil influences on human life, especially that of children, are called Graha also in the *Suśruta-saṁhitā* and divided into nine classes apparently according to the number of planets; see *Suśruta-saṁhitā, Uttara-tantra*, 27.1-5; also Monier-Williams, *SED*, p. 272, s.v. *Graha.*

346. *Yājñavalkya-smṛtī*, I, 295-308.
347. See Shastri, *India as seen in the Bṛhatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihira*, pp. 166-7.
348. See Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, pp. 749 ff..
349. *Viṣ. Dh. P.*, I, 231-2.
350. Weber, *Zwei vedische Texte über Omina und Portenta*, pp. 349 ff., esp. pp. 352-3. This is, of course, only part of the explanation offered by Weber. For a fuller examination of his views, see below, Apparently inspired by the suggestions of Weber, Bloomfield also expressed a similar opinion while explaining the use of the word *Mātṛ-kalpika* in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*; see *Kau. S.*, ed. Bloomfield, Intro., p. lviii; Cf. also below the suggestion implied in the following statement of Barth in *The Religions of India*, preface, p. xv:

> "Suppose that certain hymns of the tenth book of the *Ṛg-veda*...had not come down to us, what would we learn from the rest of the collection respecting the worship of the *manes* of the departed? We might know that India paid homage to certain powers called Pitṛs .., but we could not infer from that, any more than from later worship of the Mātṛs..., this worship of ancestors, or spirits of the dead, which, as the comparative study of the beliefs, customs, and institutions of Greece and Rome shows us, was nevertheless from the remotest antiquity one of the principal sources of public and private right, one of the bases of the family and the civic community..."

arrived dead in heaven, suggesting that they might have been regarded as the souls of the deceased human mothers occupied with the fate of their descendents on earth.[352]

The suggestion that the Mātṛs were in origin the souls of dead female ancestors and their concept and cult was modelled on the pattern of those of the dead male ancestors the Pitṛs, may appear attractive from several points of view. Apart from the obvious correspondence between the two names, like the Mātṛs, the Pitṛs also, at least in the Vedic brahmanical tradition, were conceived of as an indefinite but numerically large group of anonymous beings;[353] they also were sometimes referred to as forming groups;[354] which in epic times were often counted as seven in number.[355] Far less marked than in the case of the Mātṛs, the Pitṛs' anger nevertheless had to be reckoned with,[356] and, as the gods, they also always commanded worship and could likewise grant boons.[357]

The reliable evidence for the theory that the Mātṛs were originally souls of dead ancestresses, however, can only be of the type suggested by Weber. Probably he was right in thinking that the inclusion of the Mātṛs in the *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha* is recorded for the first time in the *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra*. Some other *Gṛhya-sūtras* also contain suggestions of or prescriptions for this rite but they do not refer to the Mothers.[358] But the same rite, under the name *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* or *Nāndīmukha Śrāddha*, is frequently described in the Purāṇic and other later Brahmanical texts, and, generally speaking, includes the worship of the Mothers, preceding that of the Fathers.[359] Since the worship

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351. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 352. The *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra*, IV. 4 runs as: *Athāta ābhyudayikam.* (1) *Āpūryamāṇapakṣe Puṇyāhe.* (2) *Mātṛyāgaṁ kṛtvā.* (3) *Yugmān vedavido brāhmaṇānupaveśya.* (4) *Pūrvāhṇe.* (5) *Pradakṣiṇamupacāraḥ.* (6) *Pitṛmantravarjaṁ japaḥ.* (7) *Ṛjavo darbhāḥ.* (8) *Yavaistilārthaḥ.* (9) *Dadhibadarākṣatamiśrāḥ piṇḍāḥ.* (10) "*Nāndīmākhān pitṛnāvāayiṣya iti*" *āvāhane.* (11) "*Nāndīmukhāḥ pitaraḥ prīyantāmiti*" *akṣayyasthāne.* (12) "*Nāndīmukhān pitṛn vācayiṣya iti*" *vācane.* (13) "*Sampanndmiti*" *tṛptipraśne.* (14) *Samānamanyadavirudbhamiti.* (15)

352. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 352, citing *Indische Studien*, I, p. 397; cf. also Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, I, p. 100.

353. See Macdonell, *VM*, p. 170; Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, p. 8 and fn. 4.

354. See groups of Pitṛs specified by family names in *RV*, X. 14.6; *VS*, XIX. 50; *AV*, XVIII. 3.15-6, 20; cf. also Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, p. 12.

355. Hopkins, *EM*, pp. 31 ff., esp. 33.

356. The Pitṛs are implored in *RV*, X. 15.6 not to injure their descendents for any sins committed against them through neglect. It is interesting to see that they are also invoked as warriors in battle *RV*, VI. 75. 9; see also *AV*, XVIII. 4.82-3. The *Mbh.*, III. 219.47 even speaks of the evil Pitṛ-grahas; see also Hopkins, *EM*, p. 34. As evil beings, afflicting human lives, especially that of children, the Pitṛ-grahas are also mentioned in the *Caraka* and *Suśruta-saṁhitas*; see *Caraka-saṁhitā*, II (*Nidāna-sthāna*), 7.14; VI (*Cikitsā-sthāna*), 9.16, 20 (3), 21 (3), 88; *Suśruta-saṁhitā*, *Uttara-tantra*, 27.5; 60.12 *etc.*. Cf., however, Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 426-7.

357. See Macdonell, *VM.*, pp. 170-1; Keith, *RPVU.*, pp. 425 ff..

358. See, *e.g.*, *Āś. GS.*, II. 5. 13-5; IV.7.1 (*SBE*, XXIX, pp. 209, 250); *GGS*, IV. 3.35-7 (*SBE*, XXX, pp. 110-1).

359. See Kane, *HD*, IV, pp. 525-9; Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, pp. 31, 35 ff.; also Shastri, *Origin and Development of the Rituals of Ancestor Worship in India*, pp. 236 ff. The *Srāddha-sūtra* of Kātyāyana makes no reference to the worship of the Mātṛs in the *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha*, but Deva's commentary (Conted)

of the Mātṛs in the *Ābhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* is accompained by and in fact precedes that of the Pitṛs, as also since the rite is clearly called a *Śrāddha*, the natural inference would appear to be that the Mātṛs here are to be conceived of as dead female ancestors.

The evidence collected above, however, is not as conclusive as it appears at first sight. Bearing in mind that the rites in question are typical of the brahmanical tradition, the primary objection to Weber's suggestion would be that the *patria potestas* of the Vedic brahmanism[360] does not warrant the supposition of a cult of the dead mothers by the side of that of the dead fathers. The word *Pitaraḥ* by itself never really comprehends female ancestors in the Vedic literature or later brahmanical texts,[361] and, in the literature of the early or later Vedic period, no *Mātaraḥ* appear as recipients of proper funeral offerings.[362] It is only in the *Aṣṭakā-homa*, or, more properly, in the *Anvaṣṭakya* rite following it, that the *Gṛhya-sūtras* sometimes refer to the *piṇḍa*-offerings to the wives of the three immediate male ancestors.[363] But this is very unusual and is not likely to have provided the pattern for the so-called *Ābhyudhayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha*.[364] In the description of the same rite of *Aṣṭakā Śrāddha* in the *Purāṇas*, the dead females are generally absent.[365]

The suspicion that a cult of dead ancestresses could not have naturally developed in the Vedic brahmanical tradition is confirmed by a close scrutiny of the rites of *Ābhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* described in the *Gṛhya-sūtras* and other later texts.

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on it does, and, under the name *Mātṛ-śrāddham*, lists its regularly as a preliminary rite before the beginning of any new sacrificial undertaking; see Weber, *Zwei vedische Texte über Omina and Portenta*, p. 352. For the same rite being called *Ābhyudayika Vṛddhi* or *Nāndimūkha* Śrāddha,, see Kane, *HD*, IV, pp. 527-8. The subtle distinction made by Kane between the *Ābhyudayika* and the *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* does not affect our argument.

360. See Keith, in Rapson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of India*, I, pp. 88-9; Childe, *The Aryans, etc.*, p. 81; Poussin, *Indo-europèens et Indo-iraniens L'Inde jusque vers 300 av. J.-C.*, p. 40, quoting Meillet, *Introduction á L' ètude comparative des langues Indo-europèennes*, ch. VI; Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age*, p. 384; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 35; see also Kosambi, D.D., "On the Origin of Brahmin Gotras," *JBBRAS*, n. s., XXVI, 1950, p. 21.

361. It may be mentioned that the world *Pitarau* (masculine gender, dual number) is used in the *Ṛg-veda* in the sense of parents or father and mother; see Monier-Williams, *SED*, p. 626, s.v. *Pitṛ*. Also Dyaus, the well known Dyauspitar, sometimes appear as feminine (see Macdonell, *VM*, p. 22; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 95), and the world *Mātar* is used to indicate both the parents (see Böhtlingk and Roth, *SW*., 5. p. 699, s.v. *Mātar*). But such usages provide no evidence that the world *Pitaraḥ* (masculine gender, plural number), denoting ancestors in general who were invited to receive offerings, also included dead females ancestors.

362. Cf. Kane, *HD*, IV, p. 472. The *Ā mā, gantāṁ pitarā mātarā cā, etc.*, in *VS*, IX. 19, does not appear to us to provide an exception.

363. See Kane, *HD*, IV pp. 358 ff.; Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, p. 24.

364. See below, for suggestion on the reasons for inclusion of Mothers in this rite.

365. See Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, p. 24.

As Kapadia has demonastrated,[366] these so-called funeral offerings, which were recommended to be performed on all kinds of auspicious occasions, including the various *Saṁskāras*, differ strikingly from the normal *Pārvaṇa Śrāddha* offerings of the brahmanical tradition. The Pitṛs of the *Ābhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* form a very loosely-defined group called Nāndīmukha-pitṛs and the definition of the female ancestors is very imprecise and varying. There are marked variations also in the small details of the rite. As against the normal funeral offerings, the *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* is performed from left to right instead of from right to left; barley is substituted for sesamum; *dūrvā* replaces *kuśa*; the sacred thread is worn on the left hand side and not on the right; the brāhmaṇas invited are of an even number instead of odd; the offerings are made with the word *svāhā* and not *svadhā*; and the paternal ancestors are invoked in an inverse order, beginning with the great-grandfather. It is clear, therefore, that the *Ābhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* is not strictly speaking an obsequial rite.[367] As implied in the names of the rite as also in the designation Nāndīmukha-pitṛs, literally "the Manes of joyful countenances" or, as Kapadia suggests, "the Fathers who are faces of joyful occassions," it is a special ceremonial rite for auspicious occasions.

Since the *Ābhyudayika* or the *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* does not appear to be a typical obsequial rite, it is highly unlikely that the offering to the Mothers prescribed for these rites is a natural extension of the obsequial offerings to the Fathers, as supposed by Weber. How the Mothers came to be included in the rite is not easy to answer. It may be that their inclusion is to be explained by the growing importance of motherhood in the brahmanical tradition, perhaps under the impact of the increasing recognition of the popular mother goddess cults, even though the extant *Dharma-śāstra* literature provides no adequate proof of it.[368] It is even possible that, at a very early stage of its history, the popular cult of the Mātṛs influenced the brahmanical tradition and was responsible for the addition of the "Mothers" by the side of the Fathers in the *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha*

The possibility that the "Mothers" were included with and given precedence over the Fathers in the rite of the *Ābhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* under the influence of the popular cult of the Mātṛs seems to be strengthened by a closer look at the attempts to define and specify the so-called "Mothers" of these rites in the brahmanical texts. The short prescription in the *Śāṇkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra* does not make it clear as to who

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466. See Kapadia, *Hindu kinship*, pp. 35-6; see also the prescriptions for the rite in *Śāṅkhāyana* cited above, *Gṛhya-sūtra* as p. 225, fn. 429. For a a fuller description of the *Ābhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha*, see ane, *HD*, KIV, pp. 525-9; Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, pp. 35-41; cf. also Keith, *RPVU*, p. 427.

367. Cf. Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, p. 35.

368. The attitude of the brahmanical tradition towards women in general is truly ambivalent; for the cnsure and euology of women in the Dharmaśāstric and other works, see Kane, *HD*, II, pt. I, pp. 574 ff.; and 580 ff; also Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 177., ff., esp. 182. A good instance is the attitude of *Manu-smṛti* which, while advocating the dependence of women at every stage of their life on the male members of the family (*Manu-smṛti*, IX. 2-3), also makes a statement that the *ācārya* is ten times more venerable than the *upādhyāya*, the father a hundred times more than the *ācārya*, and the mother a thousand times more than the father (*ibid.*, II. 145).

the "Mothers" are whose worship is to be performed in the beginning of the *Ābhyudayika* rite, but the later sources discuss this point and are more informative, if less definitive. It may be noted first that, according to these later prescriptions, the worship of the Mothers is generally supposed to be accompained by that of Gaṇeśa,[369] a constant companion of the Sapta-or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās in inconography. Moreover, these deities are sometimes referred to as Mātṛ-gaṇa,[370] and, in attempts to define and specify them, they are also sometimes counted as seven or eight and identified as Brāhmī, *etc.*.[371] Further, an explanation is occasionally added that the Mothers are worshipped before the Fathers because otherwise, they perpetrate violence.[372] There is no doubt, therefore, that the Mothers of the *Āhhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* as described in the later brahmanical sources are the well known ferocious Mātṛs of the epic-Purāṇic tradition who appear in the company of Skanda, Śiva and Devī In literature and whose representations as Sapta-or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās are seen so frequently on the walls of the mediaeval Hindu shrines. It is true that dead human females are also included in the rite as described in these sources, but they usually occupy a secondary place.[373] It is also interesting to note that in such of these later sources which may be regarded as valid for a relatively earlier date, only three paternal females are included, but their number is later raised to eight, when a distinction is also made between the Divine Mothers who must be worshipped before the Pitṛs and the human mothers who must be worshipped afterwards.[374] It seems clear, therefore, that the Purāṇic and other later brahmanical texts do not generally identify the "Mothers" of the *Ābhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* as the souls of dead ancestresses. On the contrary, they give the impression that the dead paternal females were included in the rite following the inclusion of the well known Mātṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition, and their number was gradually raised to eight to correspond to the Aṣṭa-mātṛkās.[375] Since the "Mothers" are included in the rite of the *Ābhyudayika Śrāddha* as early as the time of the *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra*, the influence of the popular cult of Mātṛs on the brahmanical tradition may be suspected from that early date.

Perhaps the occasional mention of the offerings to the wives of the three immediate ancestors, besides those to the ancestors themselves, as prescribed in the *Anvaṣṭakya* rites, is also to be explained in the same manner. We do not agree with Kane that the inclusion of the wives was a natural growth in course of time.[376] For reasons already mentioned, the offerings to dead ancestresses in this rite cannot be regarded as a natural growth inside the brahmanical tradition any more than it can be in the rite of *Ābhyudayika* or *Vṛddhi Śrāddha*. But there are other considerations to support this suspicion. Apart from the fact that the brahmanical ritual texts give widely divergent opinions about several vital aspects of the *Aṣṭakā Śrāddha-e.g.*, the number of times and the dates in the year on which it was to be celebrated, the deities to be worshipped, the offerings to be made, the procedure to be adopted, *etc.*,[377]—which gives a disiinct impression that it should not be regarded as an original or typical brahmanical *Śrāddha* but only a variation of it,[378] it is interesting to note that even when the offerings to the wives of the dead ancestors is recommended, a sharp distinction is made between the wives and their husbands, creating the suspicion that these so-called wives do not belong in the rite naturally. Thus, according to the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-sūtra*, the *piṇḍas* to the males are put in the east while those to the females are put in the west, with the addition of *surā* and the scum of boiled rice,[379] Perhaps in the suggestion of the same rite in the *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya-sūtra*, the offerings to the females are required to be put behind those to the males, putting something between the two, which is taken to refer to *darbha* grass.[380]

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[369] See Kane, *HD*, IV, p. 529 and fns. 1184, 1185, quoting *Kalpataru* and Aparārka respectively. The *Kūrma Purāṇa* also prescribed the worship of the Mātṛs with Gaṇeśa in the *Nāndīmukha Śrāddha*; see Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records, etc.*, p. 258, fn. 53.

[370] See Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, p. 39, fn. 84, citing *Prayoga-pārijāta* which quotes *Brahma Purāṇa* as authority.

[371] Aparārka cities verses to show that the Mothers worshipped in the rite of *Vṛddhi Śrāddha* before the Pitṛs are seven in number and to be identified as Brāhmī, *etc.*; see Kane *HD*, IV, p. 529 and fn. 1185. See Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, p. 39 for a different list of eight Mothers. Sometimes these deities are counted as sixteen and identified as Gaurī, *etc.*, see Shastri, *Origin and development of the Rituals of Ancestor Worship in India*, p. 241; see above, for *Gauryyādi-ṣoḍaśa-mātṛkāḥ*

[372] See Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, p. 39 and fn. 84, citing *Kūrma Purāṇa* and *Prayoga Pārijāta.*

[373] See Kane, *HD*, IV, pp. 528-9; also Kapadia, *op. cit.*, 39.

[374] See Kapadia, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

[375] Cf. *ibid.*

It may be added here that the instruction *mātṛdevo bhava, pitṛdevo bhava* in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, given to the student at the conclusion of his education,[381] does not appear to us to be of any relevance in the present context. Appearing as it does beside *ācāryadevo bhava, atithidevo bhava*, probably it means no more than an expression of due respect to the mother and the father.

The idea that the goddesses could be originally spirits of dead ancestresses, especially in a matriarchal or matrilireal society, is not *prima facie* inadmissible. It may perhaps be argued in the same way as the view associated with the names of scholars like Herbert Spencer that gods, especially in a patriarchal society, were originally spirits of dead male ancestors.[382] But such an investigation is part of the much larger question of the origin of the concept of gods and of religion with which we are not concerned. Our main concern here is with the suggestion that the Mātṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition are to be derived from an earlier cult of the spirits of dead ancestresses, and our analysis shows that the earliest extant literature in India, being representative of the Vedic patriarchal tradition, naturally does not support such a hypothesis.

A passing reference has been made above to the use of the word Mātṛ in texts of the Atharva-vedic tradition. The word is actually used as part of a compound, in the forms *Mātṛ-nāmāni* or *Mātṛ-gaṇa*, literally "the names of the Mothers" or "the group of the Mothers", which invariably denotes certain texts or hymns. Thus, in its chapters on omens and portents, the *Kauśika-sūtra* frequently speaks of offerings with the recitation of *Mātṛ-nāmāni*, which thereby act as a charm against evil portents.[383] At another place, it recommends the use of the same recitation in a rite which, according to the scholiasts, is meant to exorcise the Gandharvas, Rākṣasas, Apsarases, Bhūtas, *etc.*[384] The recitation of the *Mātṛ-nāmāni* is recommended by the *Vaitāna-sūtra* in the rite of *Agnyādheya*[385] and by a *Pariśiṣta* of the *Atharva-veda* in the rite called *Brahma-yāga.*[386]

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[376] See Kane, *HD*, IV. 475.

[377] See Kane, *HD*, IV, pp. 353 ff.

[378] Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 361-2, 426.

[379] *Āś. GS.*, II.5.5, 7-8 (*SBE*, XXIX, pp. 208-9).

[380] *ŚGS.*, IV. 1. 11 (*SBE*, XXIX, p. 108).

[381] *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, I. 11. 2.

[382] See Hopkins, *The Religious of India*, pp. 8 ff.

The references in the *Kauśika-sūtra* make it very clear that the hymn entitled *Mātṛ-nāmāni* is to be identified primarily as *AV.*, II.2, which begins as *Divyo Gandharvaḥ. etc.*, but when it actually defines *Mātṛ nāmāni* at one place, the *pratīkas* cited indicate that, besides the above-mentioned hymn *AV*, VI. 111 and VIII.6 are also to be included in the group.[387] The *Atharva-veda Pariśiṣta* entitled *Gaṇa-mālā* follows the tradition of the *Kauśika-sūtra* but adds one more hymn, *viz. AV.*, IV. 20, and gives an alternative name of the group as *Mātṛ-gaṇaḥ.*[388] It may be added here that, commenting on the *sūtra* IV. 2.60 of Pāṇini, the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali explains the word *kalpa* by using *Pārāśara-kalpikaḥ* and *Pāra-kalpikaḥ* as illustrations, and a variant

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[383] *Kau. S.*, 94. 15:

Divyo gandharva iti mātṛnāmabhirjuhuyāt.

See also Weber, *Zwei vedische Texte über Omina und Portenta*, pp. 349 ff. Exactly the same text occurs at *Kau. S.*, 95.4; 96.3; 101.3; and 114.3. *Ibid.*, 136.9 reads as:

Sa khalveteṣu karmasu sarvatra śāntyudakaṁ kṛtvā sarvatra
cātanānyanuyojayenmātṛnāmāni ca.

The chs. 93-136 of the text from the book of omens and portents; see *Kau. S.*, ed., Bloomfield, Intro., p. lxviii.

[384] *Kau., S.*, 26.29 ff.

Mātṛnāmnoḥ sarvasurabhicūrṇānyaṇvaktāni hutvā śeṣeṇa pralimpati. (29) Catuṣpathe ca śirasi darbeṇḍve ṅgārakapāle 'nvaktāni. (30) *Titauni pratīpaṁ gāhamāno vapatītaro'vasiñcati paścāt. (31) Āmapātra opyāsicya mauñje tripāde vayoniveśane prabadhnāti. (32)*

See also Karambelkar, *The Atharva-vedic Civilization*, pp. 187-8. In his commentary on *AV*, II. 2 and VI. 111 (two of the three Atharva-vedic hymns identified in the *Kauśika Sūtra* as *Mātṛ-nāmāni*; see below), Sāyaṇa reproduces *Kau. S.*, 26.29 ff., cited above, and adds:

Asya sūktasya gandharvarākṣasāpsarobhūtagrahādiśāntaye
ghṛtāktasarvauṣadhihome catuṣpathe grahagṛhītaśiraḥ
sthitamṛnmayakapālāgnihomādau ca viniyogaḥ.

[385] *Vai. S.*, 5.10:

...cātanairmātṛnāmabhirvāstoṣpatyairanuyojitaiḥ.

[386] *AV. Par.*, XIXb.4.2:

Hutvā ca cātanaṁ tatra mātṛnāma-gaṇena ca,
Snāpayet pañcagavyena tathā śāntyudakena ca.

[387] See *Kau. S.*, 8.24:

Divyo gandharva imaṁ me agne yau te māteti mātṛnāmāni.

[388] *AV. Par.*, XXXII.4:

Mātṛnāmā divyo gandharva ā paśyatī'maṁ me agne yau te māte'ti
mātṛnāmāni. (4) Iti mātṛ-gaṇaḥ

reading adds to them *Mātṛ-kalpikaḥ.*[389] Weber. who noticed this word very early, did not attempt to define it.[390] Writing on the *Āsurī-kalpa*, a *Pariśiṣṭa* of the *Atharva-veda*, Magoun conjectured that as *Kālpa-sūtra* meant one familiar with the *Kalpa-sūtras* and *Pārāśara-kalpika*, was probably used of a person familiar with the *Parāśara-kalpa*, the word *Mātṛ-kalpika* should be taken to mean one who was familiar with the *Mātṛ-kalpa.*[391] He also thought that the presence of these words in the *Mahābhāṣya* without further explanation indicated that they were well understood by the people of Patañjali's time and therefore, referred to the rites and practices familiar to the Hindus. Pointing out that the *Mahābhāṣya* is very familiar with the Atharvan literature, Bloomfield also suggested that on the supposition that the word *Mātṛ-kalpika* also is Atharvan, it might be translated as "one who practices the *Mātṛ-kalpa*". He felt that the *Mātṛ-kalpa* may be the title of some minor ritualistic treatise, involving especially the use of the hymns called *Mātṛ-nāmāni* or *Mātṛ-gaṇa*, and that even though it was impossible to imagine the precise nature of these rituals, they might have dealt with "a *śrāddha* for the *Mātaras*".[392]

Bloomfield's conjecture that a ritualistic text entitled *Mātṛ-kalpa* existed which dealt with some rites of *śrāddha* for the *Mātaras* is not likely to be proved, for, as we have seen, the brahmanical ritual texts do not seem to contain clear evidence of a supplicatory obsequial rite to the dead Mothers corresponding to one for the Fathers. On the other hand, it seems certain that during mediaeval times the rites of worship of the Matṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition in general or of the Sapta-mātṛkās in particular were supposed to be in accordance with their own special *kalpas*. Explaining the statement of Varāhamihira that the images of Viṣṇu should be duly consecrated and installed by the Bhāgavatas, of Sūrya by the Magas, of Śiva by the ash-besmeared brāhmaṇas, of the Mātṛs by those versed in the *maṇḍala-krama*, *etc.*, according to the rites peculiar to the worship of the individual deities,[393] the commentator Utpala, who is generally assigned to the 9th century A.D.,[394] names the philosophies and the texts of the various sects and in that context speaks of the consecration and installation of the images of the Mātṛs according to the rites prescribed in their own *Kalpa.*[395] It is not unlikely that if a ritualistic treatise called *Mātṛ-kalpa* existed in Patañjali's time, it contained prescriptions for some brahmanised form of the popular rite of worship of the Mātṛs of epic and Purāṇic tradition. It is even possible that, while no actual text of such name existed, the popular worship of the Mātṛs was given the name *Mātṛ-kalpa* when it was incorporated in the brahmanical tradition.

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[389] *Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya*, ed. Kielhorn, vol. II, p. 284, l.3; for the variant *Mātṛ-kalpikaḥ*, see *ibid.*, p. 477.

[390] *Indische Studien*, XIII, 1873, p. 455. The word *Mātṛ-kalpika* is listed in Böhtlingk, *Sanskrit Wörterbuch*, V, p. 64, as an adjective, and in Monier-Williams, *SED*, p. 807, s.v. *Mātṛ.*, as traceable in Patañjali, but it is not explained in either.

[391] See *PAOS*, Oct. 1888, p. xiv.

[392] See *Kau. S.*, ed. Bloomfield, Intro., pp. lvii-lviii.

[393] *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 59.19.

[394] See Shastri, *India as seen in the Bṛhatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihira*, pp. 154-5.

[395] See Utpala's commentary on the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 59.19. The relevant portions of the commentary are as follows:

Mātṛṇam brāhmyādīnām .... Ye narāḥ yaṁ devamupāśritāḥ ...
tairnaraistasya devasya svavidhinā ātmīyadarśanoktenavidhānena ...,
Mātṛṇām svakalpavihitavidhānena ... kriyā kāryā.

It is not so much the doubtful occurrence of the word *Mātṛ-kalpikaḥ* in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali or the possibility of the existence of a text called *Mātṛ-kalpa* during his time that are important to us, but rather it is the use of the word *Mātṛ-nāmāni* for certain hymns of the *Atharva-veda*. The instances already quoted from the *Kauśika-sūtra etc.*, are very likely to be of great significance to the question of the origin and early history of the Mātṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition. It is particularly striking that they appear in texts directly emerging from the Atharva-vedic tradition, which by consensus is regarded as more truly representative of popular religious traditions of India.[396] Unfortunately, however, it is almost impossible to guess the real significance of the word *Mātṛ-nāmāni* or the reason why certain selected hymns of the *Atharva-veda* were called by that name.

The *AV*, II. 2, which is most frequently cited as *Mātṛ-nāman* and is always cited as the first of the group denoted by that name, is a short hymn of five verses directed towards the Gandharva and his wives, the Apsarases. It is not a hymn of adoration in the true sense of the word, but rather of supplication or propitiation of deities whom the poet held in considerable awe. This is best expressed in the last three stanzas directed to the Apsarases, especially stanza 5, in which, while the poet pays homage to these goddesses, he also calls them noisy, dusky, dice-loving and mind-confusing.[397] There is no clue in the hymn itself as to why it should have been called *Mātṛ-nāman*. The opinion of Weber that the Apsarases referred to in the hymn could scarcely have appeared as *Mātaras* to the poet and that if this hymn was used later to honour the deities called the "Mothers", it is only another instance of an inappropriate use of an old hymn by later ritualists,[398] does not appear to us to be very sound. On the contrary, if a relationship were to be imagined between the ancient Apsarases and the Mātṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition, it would appear to be significant that the former are portrayed in an unflattering manner. As we have already seen, the attribution of the name *Mātaraḥ* to the group of deities who were of the nature of fierce ogresses is essentially euphemistic. The fact remains, however, that there is nothing definite in the hymn itself to suggest that the Apsarases referred to are conceived of as Mothers and could serve as the starting point of a conception that developed into the Mātṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition.

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[396] See Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, pp. 40-2, 76-7; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 18; Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, I, pt. I, pp. 112-3; *etc.*.

[397] *AV*., II.2.5:

Yāḥ klandāstamiṣīcayokṣakāmā manomuhaḥ,
Tābhyo gandharvapatnībhyopsarābhyokaraṁ namaḥ.

[398] See Weber, *Zwei vedische Texte über Omina und Portenta*, p. 350.

The *AV*, VI. 111 is also a short hymn of four stanzas in which Agni is prayed to cure a man of insanity. The last stanza of the hymn expresses the wish that the Apsarases, Indra, Bhaga and the Viśvedevās may cure the man and restore him to normality.[399] Since the Apsarases are conceived of as agents of mental derangement (*manomuhaḥ*) in *AV*, II. 2.5, it is appropriate that they are mentioned here. But there is no suggestion in this hymn also as to why it was labelled *Mātṛ-nāman*.

The *AV*, VIII. 6 is a long hymn of 26 stanzas and apparently meant to guard a pregnant woman against demons. Apart from the fact that it is included in the group *Mātṛ-nāmāni*, the *Kauśika Sūtra* recommends the use of it in the *Sīmanta* rite while binding an amulet on a woman in the eighth month of her pregnancy.[400] Some charmed amulet or bandage seems to be suggested also in verse 20 of the hymn. Here again, presuming for the moment that the name *Mātṛ-nāman* has some relationship with the Mātṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition, it seems significant that the hymn refers to demoniacal beings who attack a pregnant woman and destroy the embryo. But otherwise, there is no indication as to why the hymn was called *Mātṛ-nāman*. Although a large number of evil beings are named in the hymn, they are generally conceived of as male rather than as female, and are more like the Puruṣa-grahas, the companions of the Mātṛ-grahas, in the retinue of Skanda-Kārttikeya in the *Mahābhārata*.

The hymn, *AV*, IV. 20, which is added by an *Atharva-veda Pariśiṣṭa* to the group *Mātṛ-nāmāni*, is addressed to a plant (*oṣadhi*) conceived of as a goddess and is supposed to impart the power to expose demons, magicians and their hostile practices. The plant-goddess is addressed as *Devī* but not called a mother.

It must be accepted, therefore, that there is nothing in the four hymns of the *Atharva-veda* noticed above which provides any definite clue to their grouping as *Mātṛ-nāmāni* in the later tradition. According to a traditional explanation, they might have been so named on account of their authorship by *Mātṛnāmarṣi*,[401] and Whitney seems to accept this in his introductory comments on *AV*, II. 2.[402] Apparently discounting the traditional explanation, Bloomfield suggested that these hymns might have been so designated because they contain the words *apsaras* (*AV*, II. 2.3, 5; VI. 111.4), *mātar* (*ibid.*, VIII. 6.1) and *devī* (*ibid.*, IV. 20.1, 2).[403]

Weber also looked to the Apsarases mentioned in *AV*, II. 2 for a possible clue towards the identification of the "Mothers" in the name *Mātṛ-nāman*, but, as noted above, he discounted the possibility that these beings could have appeared as "Mothers" to the composer of the hymn. After examining, besides Apsarases, various other feminine members of the Vedic pantheon, such a *Āpaḥ*, *Gnāḥ Devapatnyaḥ*, Aditi, Anumati,

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[399] *AV*, VI. 111.4:
Punastvā durapsarasaḥ punarindraḥ punarbhagaḥ,
Punastvā durviśvedeva yathānunmadito'sasi.

[400] See *AV*, tr. Whitney, vol. II, pp. 493-4, Introductory notes on VIII.6.

[401] See *AV*, tr. Bloomfield, *SBE*, XLII, p. 399.

[402] *AV*, tr, Whitney, vol, I, p. 39.

[403] *AV*, tr. Bloomfield, *SBE*, XLII, pp. 518-9,

Sarasvatī, evil Nirṛti, Uṣā, *Dvāro-devīḥ*, *Tisro-devīḥ*, *etc.*, he tentatively offered the suggestion that two possible sources could have combined to give rise to the concept and cult of the "Mothers".[404] As he argued, even though the ritual ignores most of the individual goddesses of the Vedic pantheon, this gap is filled by the rite called *Patnī-saṁyājas* in which offerings were made collectively to the "wives of the gods" (*Devapatnyaḥ*). The possibility that the "Mothers" of the expression *Mātṛ-nāman* could be connected to these "wives" is suggested, according to him, by the fact that in the only place where the "wives" of the *Patnī-saṁyāja* rite seem to be named, *viz. Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra*, III. 8.10, they are specified as Indrāṇī, Rudrāṇī, Śarvāṇī and Bhavānī, and remind us of the eight-fold Mothers of later times and of prescriptions such as that in the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* that the images of the Mātṛs should be fashioned according to the names and forms of their respective male counterparts. Another, more popular sources for the origin of the worship of the "Mothers", according to him, could have been a cult of the dead ancestresses modelled on the pattern of the supplicatory rites to the Pitṛs, to which a reference has already been made above. Since the *Kauśika-sūtra* mentions the "Mothers" in special relation with the Apsarases, it appeared significant to Weber that the latter appear under the names Ambā, Ambāyu, in the *Kauśītakī Upaniṣad* and are portrayed as welcoming the newly arrived dead.[405] Notwithstanding the above explanations, however, he confessed that since the contents of the Atharva-vedic hymns under reference do not give much help, it was impossible to determine the reason why these hymns were called *Mātṛ-nāmāni* or to imagine the significance of the "names" of the Mothers.[406]

The second part of Weber's hypothesis, that a cult of the dead Mothers, modelled on the pattern of the *śrāddhas* for the dead Fathers, could have been at the root of or helped to form the concept of the Mātṛs, has already been examined. As we have seen, whether or not the Mātṛs of the epic-Purāṇic tradition were originally souls of dead ancestresses, at least the extant brahmanical literature provides no clear proof of it, and it is highly unlikely that such a concept could have naturally developed in the Vedic brahmanical tradition.

The other hypothesis of Weber that the *Devapatnyaḥ* of the rite of *Patnī-saṁyājas* could be regarded as prototypes of the later Mātṛs is also quite unacceptable. It has been demonstrated above that the concept of the Sapta-or Aṣṭa-mātṛkās counted as Brāhmī, *etc.*, *i.e.*, the concept of the Mātṛs as the personified "Energies" of the gods, is in all probability a late growth in the cult of these goddesses and its development cannot be placed before the beginning of the Christian era. It has also been suggested that the so-called "wives" of the gods in the Vedic religion, whether taken individually or collectively, provide no real parallelism with the later Mātṛs who, as "Energies" and at least in the from of the groups called the Sapta-or Aṣṭa-mātṛikās, are not really the wives of their respective male counterparts. It may be added that while the group-nature of the

[404] Weber, *Zwei vedische Texte über Omina und Portenta*, pp. 350 ff..

[405] *Ibid.*, p. 352; In suggesting that the *Kauśika-sūtra* brings the *Mātaras* in special relation to the Apsarases, Weber apparently means that this text uses the hymns called *Mātṛ-nāmāni* in rites to exorcise beings like the Apsarases; see above.

[406] See Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

Devapatnyaḥ in the *Patnī-saṁyāja* rite is clear, there is nothing known of the character of this group or of the rite in which they play such a prominent part that may be supposed to bring them close to the ferocious Mātṛs of the epic-Purāṇic tradition.

The *Patnī-saṁyājas* are typical brahamanical rites forming the closing parts of the *Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa*, which serve as the model (*prakṛti*) for all sacrifices of the type known as *Iṣṭi*.[407] They actually consist of four offerings, respectively to Soma, Tvaṣṭṛ, *Devapatnyaḥ* and Agni Gṛhapati, and the name *Patnī-saṁyāja* has to be understood rather in the sense of "offerings made (to some deities) along with the wives (of the gods)".[408] The *Devapatnyaḥ* here are obviously the same "wives of the gods" who are seen in the company of Tvaṣṭṛ also in several hymns of the *Ṛg-veda*.[409] Perhaps they include goddesses like Indrāṇī, Varuṇāṇī, Agnāyī, *etc.*, as seems to be suggested by *RV*, I.22.9-12.[410] But to our knowledge, they are never really specified and named individually except in the place referred to by Weber. This fact, in itself, appears significant to us, because when the *Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra* specifies the *Devapatnyaḥ* as Indrāṇī, Rudrāṇī, Śarvāṇī and Bhavānī, it does so in the rite of *Patnī-saṁyāja* as part of the *Śūla-gava* sacrifice.[411] Although this special rite of Rudra is described also in several other *Gṛhya-sūtras*, perhaps nowhere else do the *Patni-saṁyājas* from a part of it.[412] It is also interesting to note that, with the exception of Indrāṇī, all the names of the so-called "wives of the gods" as given in the *Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra* are only names of the wives of various forms of Rudra.[413] Keeping this in mind, as well as the fact that Rudrāṇī, as the wife of Rudra, appears for the first time only in the *Sūtra* literature,[414] it seeme to us that the individual names of the *Devapatnyaḥ* in the *Patni-saṁyāja* rite and the rite itself are only *ad hoc* introductions into the *Śūla-gava* sacrifice of the *Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra*, the opportunity being taken to introduce in this way the female counterparts of Rudra or goddesses allied to him. This is clearly demonstrated by the description of the *Śūla-gava* rite in the *Hiraṇyakeśin Gṛhya-sūtra* which, without producing individual names, prescribes offerings to the consorts of Bhava, Śarva, Īśāna, Paśupati, Ugra, Bhīma and

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[407] For the *Patnī-saṁyājas*, see Kane, *HD*, II, pt. II, pp. 1076 ff.; also Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neuund Vollmondsopffer*, pp. 151 ff.; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 320; *ŚB.*, I.9.2; *ibid.*, tr. Eggeling, *SBE*, XII, p. 256 ff..

[408] See *SBE*, XII, p. 256, fn. 1; Kane, *HD*, II, pt. II, p. 1076, fn. 2406.

[409] *RV.*, I. 22. 9; II. 31. 4; 36.3 ; VI. 50.13; VII. 35.6; X. 64.10; 66.3; see also Muir, *OST.* V, p. 229 ; Macdonell, *VM.*, p. 117; Keith, *RPVU*, pp. 205, 219.

[410] Some other goddesses mentioned in this context are Hotrā, Bhāratī, Varūtrī and Dhiṣaṇā. Since, in his commentary, Sāyaṇa explains a few of them as the wives of one or the other god, perhaps they also were included in the group *Devānāṁ patnīḥ* or *Gnāḥ* referred to in *RV*, I-22.9 and 10 respectively.

[411] *Pār. GS.*, III. 8 (*SBE*, XXIX, pp. 351-3).

[412] See *Āś. GS.*, IV. 8 (*SBE.*, XXIX, pp. 255 ff.); *HGS.*, II. 8 (*SBE.*, XXX, pp. 220 ff.). For other references and a short description of the rite, see Kane, *HD.*, II, pt. II, pp. 831-2.

[413] Bhava and Sarva, which appear as independent deities in the *Atharva-veda* (see *AV*, IV. 28.1 ; VI. 93.2; X. 12.3, *etc.*,) are already names of Rudra in the *Yajur-veda* and the *Brāhmaṇas* ; see *TS*, IV. 5.5; *VS*, XVI. 28 : *ŚB*, 1.7.3. 8; VI. 1.3.11, 15; also Macdonell, *VM*, p. 75; Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 103-5.

[414] See Macdonell, *VM*, p. 125 ; Keith, *RPVU* p. 218.

Mahādeva, but does not call it *Patni-saṁyāja* offering.[415] Thus, even if a relationship were to be imagined between the "wives of the gods" named in the *Pāraskara Gṛhya-sūtra* and the Mātṛs of the epic-purāṇic tradition, it would not prove a necessary relationship of the latter with the *Devapatnyaḥ* of the normal *Patnī-saṁyājas* or as companions of Tvaṣṭṛ.

In the light of the above analysis, it appears almost impossible to determine the real significance of the name *Mātṛ-nāman*, especially as the contents of the Atharva-vedic hymns so designated offer little help. In our opinion, the choice of the name *Mātṛ-nāman* is neither as accidental as the native explanation implies nor as arbitrary as suggested by Bloomfield. We are strongly inclined, like Weber, to treat the name as very meaningful and to suspect some relationship with the Mātṛs of the epic and Purāṇic tradition. It is difficult to say, however, what is the precise nature of this relationship or who are the "Mothers" in the name *Mātṛ-nāman*. The fact that the hymns in question deal with uncanny and evil spirits and magical practices involving them may not be of any special relevance to the problem, for the majority of hymns in the *Atharva-veda* are of a similar nature.[416] As far as the hymns under discussion themselves permit us to conjecture, the only likely candidates for the designation Mātṛ may be the Apsarases referred to in *AV*, II.2.3, 5 and VI. 111.4, and, as we have already seen, the difficulty pointed out by Weber is not necessarily a very serious one.

The Apsarases are amongst the minor deities of the Vedic pantheon.[417] It is generally agreed that they were originally water-nymphs, but even in the *Ṛg-veda* their conception has developed far from their natural source. They have become rather heavenly or celestial nymphs, and, in the later *Saṁhitās*, their domain fully extends over the earth, trees, clouds, heavens, *etc.*. Again, already in the *Ṛg-veda*, more than one Apsaras is spoken of, and by the later Vedic period, the close association of the Apsarases with the Gandharvas, as their beloveds and wives, assume the character of an oft-repeated formula. In the Vedic pantheon, the Apsarases are essentially beautiful beings fond of love, song, dance and play, and it is this aspect, generally speaking, that is noticed in a developed form in the epic and Purāṇic myths. The only aspects of their character, besides their group nature, which may be imagined to bring them nearer to the Mātṛs of the epic and the *Purāṇas*, are the sinister ones suggested in the *Atharva-veda*. These, as we have already seen, are clearly reflected in one of the hymns later labelled as *Mātṛ-nāmāni*, in which the Apsarases are called *mano-muhaḥ*, "mind confusing".[418] Explaining this expression as *unmādakāriṇaḥ*, Sāyāṇa cites a statement from the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* which says : "...it is the Gandharva and the Apsarases who madden him who is mad...".[419] A certain connection of the Apsarases with mental derangement can also

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415. See *HGS.*, II. 8.7 (*SBE.*, XXX, pp. 221-2).
416. See Bloomfield, *The Atharva-veda and the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, p. 57 and ff. ; Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, I, pt. I, pp. 111 ff. ; Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, pp. 151 ff.
417. For this and the following statements about the nature of the Apsarases in the Vedic religion, see Macdonell, *VM.*, pp. 134-5 ; Keith, *RPVU.*, pp. 179 ff.
418. *AV*, II. 2.5.
419. *TS*, III. 4.8.4 :
    Gandharvāpsaraso va etam unmādyanti ya unmādyati.
    See Sāyaṇa's commentary on *AV*, II. 2.5.

be inferred from *AV.*, VI. 111.4.[420] In still another hymn of the *Atharva-veda*, the Apsarases are prayed to depart from the vicinity of men to the river and the banks of the waters.[421]

It is quite likely, therefore, that the Apsarases had a malevolent streak in their character.[422] But this by itself provides too feeble a ground to suggest that they may have served as prototypes of the Mātṛs of epic and Purāṇic traditions, particularly as there is no certainty that a marked malevolence was an essential chracteristic of the Apsarases. At least, the epic and Purāṇic myths retain no clear memory of it. In his survey of the epic mythology, the worst that Hopkins notes in the character of the Apsarases is that ordinarily they are not shy and the best of them is described as lewd and pitiless.[423] As a general rule, the epic Apsarases are very free in their love and are conceived of as deities of love-lorn women,[424] none of which aspects bespeak essential malevolence or provide parallels with the Mātṛs.

The prehistory of the Mātṛs, *i.e.*, their history before appearance in the epic and such classical Sanskrit works as the dramas of Bhāsa and Śūdraka, therefore, remains obscure, and nothing more can be stated with confidence beyond the simple assertion that they are likely to be very old divinities of India and to have originated, in all probability, outside the brahmanical tradition. We have seen that there is a strong probability that a popular cult of the Goddess or several goddesses existed in the Indus Valley culture.[425] Moreover Rudra-Śiva-with whom the Mothers were so intimately connected in later history—if not wholly of non-Vedic origin, had many non-Vedic elements in his make-up and it is very likely that a god similar to him was worshipped by the people of the Indus Valley culture. Thus it is possible that the Mātṛs were already known in the times of the Indus Valley and the Vedic cultures. But there is no definite evidence in support of this, and, for all practical purposes, these goddesses are recognizable in literature only from the time of the *Mahābhārata*, (*Daridra-*) *Cārudatta*, *Mṛcchakaṭika*, *etc.* Also, inasmuch as their concept in the epic and Purāṇic myths shows some correspondence with astral figures, it may be imagined that, already in the epic, the Mātṛs do not appear in their original form but have assumed a somewhat complex character by absorbing alien features.

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[420] See above. Sāyaṇa makes similar comments on this verse as on *AV*, II. 2 5.

[421] *AV*, IV. 37.3 :

Nadīṁ yantvapsaraso' pāṁ tāramavaśvasam,
Gulgulūḥ pīlā naladyaukṣagandhiḥ pramandanī,
Tat paretāpsarasaḥ pratibuddhā abhūtana.

Cf. also *ibid.*, vv. 2, 4 and 5.

[422] See Keith, *RPVU*, p. 182 and fn. 3, suggesting a comparison with Mannhardt, *Wald-und Feldkulte*, II, pp. 36 ff. Keith believes that the Gandharva may have obtained his power of causing mental derangement or mental excitement from the Apsarases. He cites an instance recorded in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* in which a Gandharva, in conjunction with an Apsaras, brings about the madness and death of a brāhmaṇa ; see *RPVU*, p. 182 and fn. 9.

[423] Hopkins, *EM*, p. 161. Generally speaking, in classical Hinduism, the Apsarases are dangerous only to the ascetics whom they seduce ; see Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, vol. I, p. 110.

[424] Hopkins, *EM*, 161.

[425] See above, Ch. II.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE MĀTṚ-CULT

From what we have seen above of the origin and history of the Mātṛ cult, it may be safely concluded that, though of obscure origin and probably of great antiquity, this cult becomes noticeable around the beginning of the Christian era, and from about the beginning of the early mediaeval period it becomes very popular in the brahmanical tradition. From notices in literature, no safe generalizations can be made about the specific geographical distribution of this cult, except that it was probably popular all over North India and Deccan. It has been suggested on the basis of archaeological finds that, at least in the early mediaeval period, the Mātṛ cult was widely prevalent in the Malwa region;[426] and, similarly, that as the Sapta-mātṛs were so popular with the early Cālukyas, it is probably from their region that the cult of a definite number of the Mothers with a specific iconography, migrated towards Orissa in the north-east and the Pāṇdya-Pallava territories in the south and east.[427] There may be some truth in both the suggestions, but, based as they are, generally speaking, on the provenance of Mātṛ icons, they should not be overemphasized. From about the beginning of the Christian era, Western India, including the Malwa region, seems to have been a stronghold of Śivaism,[428] and it is but to be expected that Mātṛ icons would have a relatively greater concentration in this region. The testimony of Śūdraka and Bāṇa would appear to support this to a certain extent, as also that of the very important Gaṅgdhār and Deograh inscriptions. But it should be borne in mind that discoveries or absence of icons of a certain deity or deities in a particular area will always involve an element of accident, particularly as monuments in North India were the worst sufferers from Muslim iconoclastic zeal. Nevertheless we cannot ignore the testimony of the Bihar fragmentary pillar inscription, which would speak of a popular Mātṛ cult in that region, and the fact that the earliest Mātṛ's icons, in fairly large number, hail from Mathura. The only safe conclusion appears to be that during the early centuries of the Christian era, the Mātṛ cult was equally popular all over North India and continued to be so also in the early mediaeval period.

The above inference is in accord with the general literary testimony. The evidence of the epic and the *Purāṇas*, of course, cannot be localised with any certainty, and probably the same is true also of Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Śūdraka, Varāhamihira, Bāṇa, *etc.*, for the simple reason that, while drawing upon popular beliefs and practices, they were never the less producing idealized works in a traditional style. The pantheon reflected in the poetical works of Kālidāsa and the astrological prescriptions of Varāhamihira may reflect the respective authors' biases, but they cannot be regarded as parochial in character; and the same should also be true in the cases of Amara, Bhāsa, Śūdraka and

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[426] See Goetz, "Gupta Sculptures from Northern Gujarat", *JGRS*, XIV, no. 1, 1952, p. 5.

[427] See Srinivasan, *Some Aspects of Religion as revealed by Early Monuments and Literature of the South*, p. 26.

[428] See above, Ch. II.

Bāṇa. Unless pointedly localised by the author and corroborated by independent evidence, the casual mention of the shrine of a deity or its cult should be understood as valid for the entire geographical horizon with which the author was familiar. Thus, Cāruddatta's *bali* to the Mātṛs as referred to by Bhāsa and Śūdraka need not be regarded as specific evidence of the Mātṛ cult in the Ujjain area. At best it would be good evidence of the popularity of that cult even amongst respectable people like Cārudatta in the age of the two authors. Similarly, the account of the Mātṛs being propitiated to cure Harṣa's father, as referred to in the *Harṣacarita*, and, for that matter, the *Mātṛ-gṛha* near which Bhairavācārya was staying, have no special relevance for the Sthāṇviśvara region. Bāṇa's reference to the throwing of *bali* to the Mātṛs at night in the *Harṣacarita* or to Vilāsavatī propitiating these divinities for a son in the *Kādambarī* also suggest that such were common practices in the author's age.

Indubitable epigraphic evidence, combined with sculptural testimony, would make it certain that in the age of the Kadambas, and later in that of the early Cālukyas of Badami, the Mātṛ cult was popular also in south-western Deccan, and the close political contacts of this region with that of Pāṇḍyas and Pallavas on the one hand and southern Orissa on the other[429] are no doubt some grounds for Srinivasan's other suggestion noted above, especially in view of the lack of independent evidence of the Mātṛ cult in these regions in the earlier period and its popularity in the later one. We are not aware of any literary or archaeological evidence which may conclusively prove the existence of Mātṛ cult in Orissa before the 7th century A.D.,[430] although it was obviously quite popular afterwards. Similarly, in the Tamil region, the cult appears only in the 8th century A.D.[431] Srinivasan's suggestion, however, has the weakness of being based largely on negative evidence. We have to remember that there is too strong a local tradition in south India of the seven mothers or seven sisters.[432] to be explained as an import to that region in mediaeval times. Again, if a popular Mātṛ cult is presumed in Bihar in the 5th-6th century A.D., the possibility cannot be ruled out that the existence of this cult in Orissa in the mediaeval period was essentially a part of a widely prevalent Mātṛ cult in North India during that and the earlier periods. It should also be remembered that during the mediaeval period, Orissa was an important centre of Tantric-*Śākta* cult,[433] and the cult of the Mātṛs there might be affiliated to it.[434] In this form at least, the Orissan phenomenon has no direct links with the Cālukyan region.

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[429] See Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, pp. xliv, 238, 240.

[430] See, however, below.

[431] Srinivasan, op. cit., pp. 24 ff..

[432] See *e.g.* Sastri, *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, p. 229; Elmore, *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*, ch. III ; Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India*, pp. 29, 32, 39.

[433] See Sahu, *Budhism in Orissa*, chs. IX and X, esp. pp. 141 ff. ; Panigrahi, *Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar*, pp. 102 ff., 232 ff. ; also Brown, *Indian Architecture* (*Hindu and Buddhist Periods*), p. 131, Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 362 and Boner and Śarmā, *Śilpa Prakāśa*, etc., Intro., pp. xix, xx.

[434] For the Tantric affiliation of the Mātṛ-cult, see below.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE CULT OF THE MĀTṚS

The types of evidence utilized above for the reconstruction of the Mātṛ-cult in the early centuries of the Christian era are not very enlightening in respect of details, but a few points may be noted. Considering the clear references to *Mātṛ-gṛha*, and *Mātṛ-bhavana, etc.*, in literature and inscriptions, it is certain that independent shrines were built for these divinities. Such shrines might imply regular worship even if it was not identical with the brahmanical or āgamic mode of worship. Perhaps there were regular or periodical animal sacrifices in such shrines, in view of the malevolent nature of these deities and specific references to their being fond of blood and wine.[435]

The testimony of the Gaṅgdhār inscription is quite in accord with the nature of the Mātṛ deities when it describes them as stirring up the very oceans with the mighty winds arising from the rites of their religion.[436] Since the inscription uses the word *tantrodbūta* to qualify these rites—the first epigraphic mention of this word-it is cited as evidence of antiquity of Tantrism in India.[437] We cannot enter here into the complex question of the origin and nature of Tantrism, but it may be mentioned that Tantrism, as known to us from the texts going under the name of *Tantras*, is a considerably sophisticated religion and far from being a popular, folk cult, such as the Mātṛ-cult essentially must have been.[438] It would, therefore, be presumptuous to regard the so-called "Tantric" rites of the Mātṛs in the Gaṅgdhār inscription as identical with the rites of the Tantric texts. The inscription, however, greatly strengthens the probability that, although several extraneous elements went into the making of Tantrism, perhaps its nucleus was formed of essentially popular, unsophisticated and crude, unbrahmanical cults largely of female deities like the Mātṛs.

The contribution of the cult of the Mothers towards the formation of classical Tantrism seems to be corroborated also by Varāhamihira, who lays down that the persons especially qualified to install the icons of the Mātṛs and perform their worship are those versed in the *maṇḍala-krama*.[439] The word *maṇḍala* is highly suggestive, and seems to imply a mode of worship analogous to the later Tantric rites. In Kāṇha's *Dohākoṣa*, the word *maṇḍala-karma*, distinguished from *japa* and *homa*, seems to be synonymous with Tantric rites, and, as suggested by Banerjea, might be regarded as a variant of the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* word.[440] *Maṇḍala*, like other Tantric technical terms, is of complex meaning, implying a circular configuration of spiritual powers both inside and outside the human body, but in its ordinary ritualistic usage it may be understood as a circular arrangement of deities for invocation and worship.[441] Considering the general nature of the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* of Varāhamihira, devoted as it is to sophisticated rituals and astrological materials, perhaps the reference to *maṇḍala-krama* in it actually anticipates the later Tantrism of the texts,[442] but it is difficult to say if the Mātṛs were always popularly worshipped in such a manner. Early sculptures do not seem to warrant this and no such system is clearly implied in the Gaṅgdhār inscriptions.

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[435] Cf. *Mbh.*, III. 219.35.

[436] Fleet, *CII*, III, p. 76, lines 35-7 of the record, already cited.

[437] See *e.g.* Banerjea, J.N., "Some Early Literary and Archaeological Data about Tantricism", *PIHC*, XVI, 1953, pp, 24. ff. .

[438] Cf. the following statement by Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, I, pt. II, p. 531 :

> "...On the whole the *Tantras* and the curious excrescences and degenerations of religion described in them, are not drawn from popular belief or from popular traditions either of the aboriginal inhabitants or of the Aryan immigrants, but they are pseudo-scientific productions of theologians, in which the practice and theory of Yoga and the doctrines of the monist (*advaita*) philosophy are seen mingled with the most extravagant symbolism and occultism."

[439] *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 59.10, already cited.

[440] Banerjea, op. cit., *PIHC*, XVI, p. 27.

If we understand the word *maṇḍala* in a somewhat loose, literal sense of a circular configuration of icons or symbols of deities, and not in the technical sense of the Tantric *maṇḍalas*, it is not improbable that the Mātṛs were propitiated in a *maṇḍala* form—at least in some magical rites involving them—from the very beginning. The use of *maṇḍalas* or mystical circular diagrams is of greater antiquity than the Tantric texts. Its history in the Vedic brahmanical tradition has sometimes been traced back to the later *Saṁhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*.[443] But considering the magical ideas associated with it, its prevalence need not have been confined to the learned tradition of the Vedic sacrificial ritual, and the drawing of charmed circles may have been an essential feature of popular magical rites.[444] However, when the Mātṛs are actually said to have been propitiated as a *maṇḍala*, perhaps their cult was already being incorporated into the Tantric movement. Thus the propitiation of the *Mātṛ-maṇḍala*, as referred to in the *Harṣacarita*, in which young nobles burnt themselves with lamps,[445] appears to fall in line with the possibly Tantric rite suggested in the *maṇḍala-krama* of the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, rather than to be a cult of popular kind, and the same may be said of the reference in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* to the establishment of the *Mātṛ-cakras* in or near the shrines of Śiva.[446] Considering the period to which they belong, the circular shrines for the Mātṛs, or shrines in which they were installed in a circular fashion, during mediaeval times may have been essentially Tantric establishments. The dancing Mātṛkās of Bherāghāṭ seem to have come from such a shrine.[447] Apart, however, from the suggestiveness of relatively early evidence like the Gaṅgdhār inscription, or the *Bṛhatsaṁḥitā* and *Harṣacarita*, the Mātṛs appear prominently in later times in purely Tantric rites.[448]

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441. See general remarks by Conze in the context of *maṇḍala* in Tantric Buddhism; *Buddhism : Its Essence and Development*, p. 187 f. ; also Woodroffe, *Śakti and Śākta*, pp. 547-8 ; Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, pp. 1131 ff. .
442. Banerjea, op. cit., *PIHC*, XVI, p. 27.
443. See Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, pp. 1131 ff. .
444. Cf. Conze, op. cit., p. 187.
445. *Harṣacarita*, ed. Kane, 5th *ucchvāsa*, p. 21 ; tr. Cowell and Thomas, p. 135; see also above, p. 99.
446. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, V. 55 : see also *ibid*., I. 122, 335 ; III. 99.
447. See Mitra, Debala, "Dancing Mātṛkās of Bherāghāṭ", *JASL*, XXII, no. 2, 1956, pp. 237 ff., where relevant references to Cunningham's *Archaeological Survey Reports* and Banerji's *The Haihayas of Tripuri and their Monuments* is also given.
448. See *e.g. Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, X. 124, 127. cf. also *Śilpa Prakāśa*, II. 66 (Boner and Śarmā, *Śilpa Prakāśa, etc.*, text p. 48 and tr. p. 66) :

    Evaṁ prāsādabhedā syuḥ vaitālikā mahat tathā,
    Mātṛbheda eṣa prāsāda tāntrikaḥ saudha ucyate.

The offering of *bali* to the Mātṛs at the crossroads, as referred to in the dramas of Bhāsa and Śūdraka, and the analogous rite of throwing *bali-piṇḍas* to the Mātṛs in different directions at night, as in the *Harṣacarita*, may refer to some brahmanised form of a rite in honour of these deities.[449] But, curiously, no details of such a rite are available in brahmanical ritual texts. Kosambi traces it to a peculiar rite described in the *Mānava Gṛhya-sūtra* for the evening before the last *Aṣṭakā*, in which the sacrificer kills a cow at the crossroads, dismembers it and divides the flesh among the passers-by, although it is not mentioned for whom this particular offering is meant,[450] The *Aṣṭakās* as we have seen, were domestic offerings to the dead and were performed generally three to four times in a year.[451] There were no uniform rules about the deities of these offerings, but the Pitṛs were naturally the main recipients. It has also been noted above that the *Aṣṭakā* rite was generally followed by *Anvaṣṭakya* in which offerings were made also to the Mothers along with the Fathers, although a distinction was made between the two, inasmuch as they were sometimes assigned two different directions of the compass or their seats were separated by some mechanical means. Kosambi notes this distinction between the Mothers and the Fathers, and also emphasizes the fact that the curious *Mānava* rite of the distributed of cow's flesh at the crossroads should fall on the sixth day of the dark half of the lunar month.[452] The fact that the rite was to be performed at the crossroads, as well as the data when it was to be performed, would no doubt bring it close to the *Mātṛ-bali* of Bhāsa and Śūdraka,[453] but the *Mānava Gṛhya-sūtrā* itself does not specify that the rite was for the Mothers, Kosambi, however, feels that, since in the later Vedic literature offerings were conjointly made to Rudra and his "sister" Ambikā at the crossroads,[454] and Rudra was remembered as *Tryambaka*—one having three Mothers, Ambikā herself being one of the three[455]—the presumption is strong that the *Mānava* rite was for the Mother not as mere female ancestresses but as deities in their own right whom it was necessary to appease, although Vedic practice did not enjoin it. The non-Vedic nature of these deities, according to him, also explains why they are not named specifically. The argument is ingenious and carries considerable conviction, but remains doubtful in the absence of the Mātṛs or Ambikās being specifically named as recipients of the crossroads offering of the cow's flesh.

In his fairly detailed paper, Kosambi takes pains to explain the choice of crossroads for offerings to the Mātṛs. By a field investigation of mother-goddess cult-sites in Maharashtra, he notes a mother-goddess in every village in the region, their cult-sites located generally outside habitation areas by the side of a water-tank or grove, the general injunctions against any roofing over the red-daubed shapeless stones that were the goddesses, the goddesses being generally without consorts, the more fashionable cult-spots visited by a number of people out of all proportion to residents in the vicinity, and what is more important to his thesis, the invariable discovery of a far greater concentration of microliths at the cult-sites than at any other location nearby. Kosambi thus comes to the conclusion that these goddesses are all of primitive, pre-agricultural origin, and argues: "The fixed cult-spots for pre-agricultural people would necessarily be those were their regular paths crossed, places where they met for their pre-barter exchange with the ceremonial and communal ritual that always accompanied it, or where several groups celebrated their periodic fertility cults in common".[456] He has tried to strengthen his thesis by demonstrating that some of these prehistoric tracks eventually developed into trade-routes and that ancient literature like the *Jātakas* speaks of traders and travellers, when setting out, making animal sacrifices at the crossroads, by a tree outside the village, or in a grove or jungle on the way. According to him, therefore, Cārudatta's offering to the Mātṛs must be in this tradition of sacrificing to deities en route, and presumably the ritual propitiation was carried out by pious caravan merchants even when they remained at home.[457] Earlier, in the beginning of his enquiry, Kosambi also notes that in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* reference the ordinary crossing of two city streets would not serve the purpose; the *catuṣpatha* had to be on a highway (*rāja-mārga*) outside the town.[458]

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[449] This presumption is based on the fact that here Cārudatta of the two Sanskrit dramas is a brāhmaṇa albeit in merchants' profession, and is proud of his brāhmaṇa lineage and culture; see above, in pp. 98 and fn. 16. For the rite of throwing *bali-piṇḍas* to the Mātṛs as referred to in the *Harṣacarita*, see above, p. 99.

[450] Kosambi, D.D. "At the Crossroads : A study of Mother-Goddess Cult Sites", in his *Myth and Reality*, pp. 82 ff. ; see also Keith *RPVU*, pp. 428—9, citing *Mānava Gṛhya-sūtra*, II. 9.1—3.

[451] For the *Aṣṭakās* and the rite of *Anvaṣṭakya* accompanying it, see apove, pp. 157, 160.

[452] Kosambi, *Myth and Reality*, p. 84.

[453] The *Mātṛ-bali*, referred to in the *Cārudatta* and *Mṛcchakaṭika* is also likely to have fallen on the 6th day of the dark half of the month ; see above, pp. 99.

[454] Kosambi, op. cit., p. 84, citing *ŚB*, II. 6.2.9 ; see also above, pp. 146

[455] Cf. Arbman's view, cited above, pp. 146.

It was necessary to cite Kosambi at length to do justice to his painstaking enquiry. His arguments here too are ingenious but over-imaginative. Several presumptions seem to underlie them which, especially as far as they are supposed to explain the *mātṛ-bali* at crossroads, appear either unnecessary or unwarranted. As Kosambi himself seem to have been aware, crossroads along with roads, open spaces, trees and forests, river banks, hills, caves and crematoria, *etc.*, were often regarded as inauspicious places, being haunts of evil, demoniacal beings.[459] No special explanation for this need normally be found necessary except the natural one that such places may incite fear and insecurity.[460] Since the Mātṛs also were conceived of as ferocious evil beings, their association with such places is to be expected. It may also be noted that the inauspicious nature of crossroads is not singularly Indian but almost universal phenomenon,[461] for which, if one explanation has to be supplied at all, it would have to be like the simple one suggested above. Kosambi's argument that the crossways were natural cult-spots in the pre-agricultural stage of society in India appears presumptuous to us. Still, even if this were accepted as true, it would not prove that they should necessarily be sites for mother-goddess cults, unless one makes another unwarranted presumption that such cults were the sole religion of the pre-agricultural population. Our concern, however, is with the explanation of the rite referred to in the two Sanskrit dramas, and we feel that, despite his labour, Kosambi does not enlighten us very much. Apart from his unwarranted presumption that the *catuṣpatha* referred to in the *Mṛcchakaṭika* has to be outside the town, he completely overlooks the fact that here we are dealing not with a rite to mother-goddesses in general, but one to a special group of them, the Mātṛs. His emphasis on the non-Aryan nature of the mother-goddesses in India, their anonymity in the brahmanical tradition for that reason, the constant swelling of their number, *etc.*, is clearly irrelevant to the case of the Mātṛs, for he would appear to imply that the Mātṛs were non-Aryan goddesses thrown arbitrarily into a group in the brahmanical tradition in view of their alien nature and alien cults. As we have already seen, even when the Mātṛs appear to have been originally outside the brahmanical tradition, they were always conceived of as a group, which seems to have been their essential, inalienable, characteristic.

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[456] Kosambi, op. cit., p. 95.

[457] *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

[458] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[459] *Ibid.*, p. 83 ; see MacCulloch, "Crossroads", *ERE*, 4, pp. 330 ff., which draws upon much material from India ; also above, p. 125 and fn. 182.

[460] From the instance of the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, V. 26, VI. 33, it would appear that the crossroads also served as burial sites.

[461] See MacCulloch, op. cit., *ERE*, 4, pp. 330 ff..

Appendix

An Alphabetical list of the Mātṛs as given in the *Mahābhārata, Śalya-parvan*, ch. 45 and the *Matsya-Purāṇa*, ch. 179. The number of the verse or verses in which each name occurs is indicated against it in brackets.

I *Mbh.*, IX. 45	II *Mat. P.*, 179
A	Abāla (27)
	Adarśanā (27)
	Aditi (15)
	Aghavināśinī (28)
	Ajamukhikā (24)
	Alambākṣī (22)
Alātākṣī (8)	
Amōcā (20)	
Amitāśanā (7)	
	Aparājitā (13)
Apsujātā (4)	
	Aśanī (29)
	Atibalā (12)
	Avikārā (26)
	Ayōmukhī (29)
B Bahudāmā (10)	
Bahuputrikā (3)	Bahuputrī (19)
	Bāhuśālinī (25)
Bahuyojanā (9)	
Balā (14)	Balā (12)
	Balamohinī (30)
Balotkaṭā (22)	
Bhadrakālī (11)	
	Bhagamālinī (11)

I *Mbh.*, XI. 45	II *Mat, P.*, 179
Bhaganandā (11)	Bhagānandā (11)
Bhāminī (11)	
Bhaṅgadā (26)	
Bhavadā (13)	
Bhayaṁkarī (4)	
Bheḍī (13)	
Bherīsvanamahāsvanā (25)[1]	
	Bhīmā (22)
Bhogavatī (8)	
Bhramā (12)	
	Bhrukuṭī (19)
	Bhuśuṇḍī (16)
	Bhūtaḍāmarī (31)
Bhūtitīrthānyagocarā (27)[2]	
	Biḍāli (12)
	Brāhmī (9)
Bṛhadambālikā (4)	
C Cakranemi (5)	
	Calacchikhā (11)
	Calajjvālā (32)
	Cāmuṇḍā (10)
	Caṇḍā (16)
	Candrasenā (26)

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1. If this word gives the names of two goddesses, they might be understood as Bherīsvanā and Mahāsvanā.
2. This may be understood as giving the names of two different goddesses, Bhūti and Tīrthānyagocarā.

	I *Mbh.*, XI. 45	II *Mat. P.*, 179
	Candraśitā (11)	
		Candrika (30)
	Catvaravāsinī (12)	
	Catuṣkarnī (24)	
	Catuṣpathaniketā (25)	
	Catuṣpatharatā (27)	
		Citrarūpiṇī (20)
	Citrasenā (4)	
		Cittā (28)
		Cittajalā (28)
	Curvyuti (16)	
D	Dahadahā (19)	
		Daṅṣṭrālā (23)
		Danu (19)
	Devamitrā (13)	
	Dhamadhamā (19)	
	Dhanadā (13)	
		Dhṛti (20)
	Dhruvaratnā (4)	
		Dhūmaśikhā (24)
		Dhūmrā (17)
	Dīrghajihvā (22)[3]	
		Dīrghakēśī (29)
		Diti (15)
		Dubhargā (14)[4]
		Dūtī (10, 14)[5]

	I *Mbh.*, IX. 45	II *Mat. P.*, 179
E	Eḍi (13)	
	Ekacakrā (28)	
	Ekacūḍā (5)	
	Ekākṣarā (24)	Ekākṣī (25)
		Ekavīrā (17)
G	Gaṇā (26)	Garddabhī (18)
		Ghaṇṭāravā (23)
		Ghaṭodarī (15)
	Gitapriyā (7)	
	Gokarṇī (25, 28)	Gokarṇikā (24)
	Go-mahiṣadā (27)	
	Gonasī (3)	
	Gopāli (4)	
		Grāmyā (15)
H		Haratpāpā (27)
	Haripiṇḍī (23)	
		Hāsinī (30)
		Huṅkārī (31)
J	Jalēśvarī (13)	
	Jarāyu (19)	
	Jareṇā (15)	
	Jarjarānanā (19)	
	Jarjarikā (14)	
	Jaṭālikā (22)	
		Jayā (13)
		Jayantī (13)

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3. *Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* (*Tāṇḍya-mahā-brāhmaṇa*), XIII. 6.9 refers to the female monster Dīrghajihvī, who was killed by Indra ; see Caland's tr., p. 328 and note 2 on XIII. 6.10; also Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony*, pp. 254, 272-3.
4. This may be a mistake for Durbhagā ; cf. above, p. 122, fn. 169.
5. Dūtī occurs in the two verses in the following manner : (i) Saurī saumyā śivā dūtī cāmuṇḍā cātha vāruṇī (*Mat. P.*, 179. 10b), and (ii) Kālī caiva mahākālī dūtī Caiva tathaiva ca (*ibid.*, 179. 14a). Since Śiva-dūtī is called the "Energy" of the goddess Caṇḍikā in the *Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (see above, p. 157 and fn. 91), and the iconographic texts describe her form and sculptures have been found to illustrate them (see Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 33-5), it is possible that *Śivā-dūtī* and *Dūtī* in the verses of the *Matsya Purāṇa* reproduced above actually refer to this goddess.

	I *Mph.*, IX. 45	II *Mat. P.*, 179
	Jayapriyā (12)	
	Jayatsenā (6)	
	Jayāvatī (4)	
		Jvālāmukhī (32)
		Jyeṣṭhā (20)
		Jyotsnāmukhī (26)
K	Kadrulā (7)	
		Kākajaṅghikā (23)
		Kālaparṇī (22)
	Kāleḍikā (23)	
		Kāli (14, 27)
	Kālikā (13)	
	Kalyāṇī (7)	
	Kāmacarī (22)	
	Kāmadā (26)	
	Kamalā (9)	
	Kamalākṣi (6)	
		Kāmarūpā (21)
		Kampanā (25)
		Kampinī (24)
	Kanakāvati (8)	
	Kandarā (9)	
	Kaṇḍarā (15)	
	Kaṇḍūti (13)	
	Kaṅkaṇā (15)	
	Kaṇṭakinī (16)	
		Kapāli (16)
		Kaparddinī (20)
		Karālī (14)
		Karālinī (17)
		Karṇamoṭī (15)
	Karṇaprāvaraṇā (24)	
		Kaṭumukhī (29)
		Kaumārī (9)
		Kekarī (18)
		Keśinī (23)
	Ketakī (14)	
	Khaṇḍakhaṇḍā (20)	
	Kharajaṅghā (21)	
	Kharakarṇī (25)	
	Kharī (6)	
	Khaśayā (16)	
		Kheṭā (17)
	Khyātā (19)	
	Kokalikā (15)	
		Koṇā (28)
	Koṭarā (17)	
		Kovidārī (30)
		Krauñcā (19)
		Krodhanī (29)
	Krodhanā (6)	
	Krośanā (16)	
	Kṛṣṇā (21)	
	Kṛṣṇakarṇī (24)	
	Kṣurakarṇī (24)	
		Kṣvelā (25)
	Kukkuṭikā (14)	Kukkuṭī (17)
		Kumārī (22)
		Kumbhakarṇī (22)
	Kuṇḍārikā (15)	
		Kuṭabhī (16)
		Kuṭumbikā (30)
L	Lambā (17)	Lambā (23, 30)
		Lambamekhalā(27)
	Lambapayodharā (20)	
		Lambasaṭā (28)
		Lambastanī (28)
	Lambasrī (17)	
	Lambinī (17)	Lāṅgalāvatī (27)
		Lāṅgalī (16)
		Lelihānā (18)
	Lohamekhalā (18, 21)	
	Lohitākṣī (22, 23)	
		Lohitāmukhī (23)
M	Mādhavī (7)	
	Madhukumbhā (18)	
	Madhurikā (18)	
		Madoddhatā (22)
	Mahābalā (9, 26)	
		Mahācitrā (26)

I	II
Mbh., IX. 45	*Mat. P.*, 179
Mahācūḍā (5)	
	Mahādevī (31)
	Mahāgrīvā (24)
Mahājavā (21)	
	Mahākālī (14)
Māhākāyā (23)	
	Mahāmukhī (21,24)
	Mahānādā (31)
	Mahānāsā (21)
	Mahāraktā (13)
	Mahāsurī (22)
Mahāvegā (15)	
Mahāyaśā (27)	
	Māheśvarī (9)
Mahiṣānanā (25)	
	Mahodarī (31)
Mālatikā (4)	
	Mālinī (9)
Maṇḍodarī (17)	
	Maṅgalā (21)
Maṇikuṇḍalā (20)	
Manojavā (16)	
	Manoramā (26)
Manthanikā (19)	
	Mārī (15)
	Mātaṅgī (27)
	Mātṛnandā (12)
	Māyā (21)
Meghamālā (28)	
Megharavā (28)	
Meghasvanā (8)	
Meghavāsinī (17)	
	Menakā (20)
	Mohanā (25)
	Mṛtyu (15)
	Mukhamaṇḍikā (12)
	Mukhevilā (21)
	Muktikā (30)
Mukuṭā (23)	
N	Nairṛtā (10)
Nandinī (5)	Nandinī (14, 25)
	Nārasiṁhī (11)
	Nikumbhā (26)
	Nirbhayā (25)
Niṣkuṭikā (12)	
Nṛtyapriyā (10)	
P Padmāvatī (9)	
Pakṣālikā (19)	
Palitā (3)	
	Parikampinī (24)
Paśudā (27)	
Payodā (27)	
	Picchilā (11)
	Pilapicchikā (13)
	Piṇḍajihvā (32)
Piṅgākṣī (18, 21)	
	Piṅgalā (23)
	Piśācī (16)
Prabhāvatī (3)	
Praghasā (16)	
	Pramodā (27)
Pratiṣṭhā (28)	
	Pretayānā (19)
Pṛthuvaktrā (18)	
Pūṣaṇā (20)	
Pūtanā (16)	
R	Rabhasā (26)
	Raktā (12)
	Raktakampanā (26)
	Rākṣasī (16)
	Rambhā (20)
	Revatī (13)
Rocamānā (28)	
	Rocanā (22, 23)
	Rudrasusaṭā (31)
	Rudreśī (31)
S	Sadāhā (22)
	Śailamukhī (19)

I *Mbh.*, IX. 45	II *Mat. P.*, 179
	Śākrī (10)
	Śakumī (12)
Śalabhī (6)	
	Salilā (20)
	Sāmānyā (30)
	Samāsavī (30)
Samedī (13)	
Saṁkārikā (12)	
Saṁtānikā (9)	
	Saṅgamā (21)
	Śāṅkarā (16)
Śaṅkhakumbhasvanā (26)	
Śaṅkhanikā (14)	
	Śaṅkhinī (23)
	Śaṅkukarṇī (31)
	Śāntikā (28)
	Sarpakarṇī (25)
Sasirā (28)	
Śaśolūkamukhī (21)	
Śataghaṇṭā (11)	
Śatānandā (11)	Śatānandā (11)
Śatodarī (15)	
Śatolūkhalamekhalā (10)	
Śatruñjayā (6)	
	Saumyā (10)
	Sauparṇī (10)
	Saurī (10)
	Siddhi (18)
	Śikhā (32)
Śiśumāramukhī (22)	
	Śivā (10)[6]
	Skhalantī (29)
Śobhanā (6)	
Śrīmatī (3)	
Stherikā (28)	
	Śubhā (29)
Subhagā (17)	Subhagā (14)
Śubhavaktrā (7)	
Subhru (8)	
	Sucirā (29)
Sudāmā (5, 10)	
Sugaṇā (26)	
Sukarṇī (28)	
Sukhadā (27)	
Sukusumā (24)	
	Sulocanā (17)
Sumaṅgalā (12)	
Sunakṣatrā (9)	
	Sunandā (12)
	Sundarī (29)
Suprabhā (10)	
Suprasādā (13)	
Supratiṣṭhā (28)	
	Surabhī (12)
	Surasā (19)
Surocanā (28)	
Suviṣāṇā (27)	
	Svadhā (20)
	Svāhā (20)
Svastimatī (12)	
Śvetā (22)	
	Śyāmā (17)
T Taḍitprabhā (16)	
Tīrthanemi (7)	
	Trijaṭī (17)
Tuṇḍā (17)	
U	Ulkāmukhī (24)
	Ulūkī (15)
	Unmattodumbārī (18)[7]
Ūrdhvaveṇīdharā (18)	
	Uṣā (20)
Utkrāthinī (15)	
Uttējanī (6)	

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[6] See above, p. 177; Fn. 5.

[7] This word may refer to two goddesses called Unmattā and Udumbarī.

	I *Mbh.*, IX. 45	II *Mat. P.*, 179
V		Vaināyakī (18)
		Vaiṣṇavī (11)
		Vaitālī (18)
		Vajrahastā (16)
	Vāmā (17)	
	Vāmanikā (23)	
		Vañcanā (27)
	Vapuṣmatī (11)	
		Vārāhī (11)
		Vāruṇī (10)
		Vāsacūrṇṇī (28)
		Vaṣaṭkārā (20)
	Vasucūḍā (17)	
	Vasudāmā (5)	
		Vāyavyā (10)
	Vetālajananī (13)	
	Veṇuvīṇādharā (21)	
	Vibhīṣaṇā (22)	
		Vicitrarūpā (21)
		Viḍambinī (19)
	Vidyujjihvā (8)	
		Vijayā (13)
	Vikatthanī (17)	
		Vinatā (19)
	Virocanā (28)	
	Vīryavatī (8)	
		Viśāladaṁṣṭriṇī (17)
	Viśālākṣī (3)	
		Visaṭā (28)
	Viśokā (5)	Viśokā (25)
	Vittadā (27)	
	Vṛddhikāmā (12)	
Y	Yaśasvinī (10)	

4

The Nude Squatting Goddess of India

Among the popular goddesses in the early centuries of the Christian era in India must be included a squatting nude goddess with a strikingly individual iconography. Although in the present state of our knowledge she remains unnamed, there is no doubt about the wide prevalence of her cult. As evidenced by her representations, she is, with some variations, portrayed nude, in an apparently squatting posture, with the legs widely separated and the pudenda fully displayed. This seems to be the essential element of the iconography of the goddess, but equally characteristic of her, to a certain extent, are the upraised arms and the concealment or obliteration of the head and face by one device or another. There is no unanimity about the identification of the goddess. She had been casually called the Earth Mother or labelled as a fertility goddess. In some more serious attempts at identification, it has been suggested on the one hand that she is a Greco-Roman goddess whose cult was imported into India in the early centuries of the Christian era, and, on the other, that she is "Aditi Uttānapad" of the *Ṛg-veda*, in other words, a characteristically Indian phenomenon. Possibility of her relationship with Upper Palaeolithic Venuses of Europe, Neolithic mother-goddesses of Western Asia and goddess cults in certain chalcolithic cultures of India has also been imagined.

Semi-nude female figures are common in Indian art,[1] but what invests the present goddess with great significance is the highly individualistic nudity of her iconography.

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[1] Excluding females in erotic compositions on mediaeval Hindu temples, which, however, belong to an independent genre and need a different explanation, completely nude female figures are not at all common in Indian art. The same is the case with male figures, except in Jaina art. Standing nude females in early Indian terracotta are noticed, particularly in the centuries before the Christian era (see *e.g.*, Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas," *Mārg*,VI, no. 2, pp. 24-9; also Agrawala, in *AI*, no. 4, pp. 151-2), although in many cases, in view of the crude style and cursory modelling, it may not be possible to be sure whether a covering dress is intended or not. In stone sculpture, as in the case of railing figures from Bhūtesar (Mathura) or the bracket *Vṛkṣakās* in the gateways of the Stūpa 1 at Sanchi, only partial nudity is to be understood, since, if the sex organs are clearly marked, there is also the clear suggestion of the covering lower garment. The marking of the sex organs in such cases, therefore, appears not so much an iconographic necessity as artistic license, no doubt in conformity with the nature of such goddesses in general and the overall attitude of the ancient Indians in such matters.

Such figures were noticed for the first time by Marshall, who published a circular terracotta plaque from Bhīṭā (near Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh) showing a female figure in high relief with upraised arms and outstretched legs, and pointed to a similar figure from Kosam (also near Allahabad), both now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.[2] The Bhīṭā figure (**Fig. 1**) is entirely nude except for a girdle of circlets around the waist and bangles on the hands and feet. Also, in place of a head, it has a lotus flower with petals falling over the shoulders. The archaeological context shows that the figure must be assigned to the Kuṣāṇa period,[3] and Marshall tentatively suggested identification with Pṛthivī, the Earth-goddess. Later, when the same author found on an oblong terracotta sealing from Harappa, on the one side, a nude female figure depicted upside-down with legs apart and a plant issuing from her womb, he suggested comparison with the Bhīṭā specimen and felt confirmed in his mind of a "cult of the Earth or Mother-goddess" in the Indus Civilization.[4]

The real interest in such figures from India seems to have started with the publication of an article, "Female Fertility Figures", by Margaret Murray.[5] The author's aim was to provide a systematic framework to classify and study the large number of female figures found throughout the ancient world which are all generally labelled as "Mother Goddess". She imagined these figures as falling in at least three distinct categories: (1) Universal Mother or Isis type; (2) Divine Woman or Ishtar type; and (3) Personified *Yoni* or Baubo type, and described the third, with which we are concerned here, as the type of nude figure, generally squatting, in which the beauty of form or features is disregarded, the secondary sexual characters, such as the breasts, are minimized, and the whole emphasis is laid on the pudenda.[6]

[2] Marshall, "Excavations at Bhīṭā," *ASI-AR*, 1911-2, p. 75, and pl. XXIII, fig. 40. For the Kosam figure, see *Indian Museum Cat.*, II, p. 286, no. Km. 36, as cited by Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 75. He however, neither illustrates the Kosam figure nor provides a detailed description of it.

[3] Marshall himself was uncertain of it as heassigned the figure to the "Kuṣāṇa or the Gupta period"; but see Sankalia, *Art. As.*, XXIII, 1960 (also cited below), p. 114.

[4] Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, p. 52 and pl. XII. 12. The figure occurs at the extreme right end of this seal, and to its left, separated by a pictograph in the centre, two rearing and confronting animals, probably tigers, "the animal genii" of Marshall. Wheeler's suggestion that what looks like a plant issuing from the figure's womb "may equally be a scorpion or even a crocodile" (see Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 106) is not convincing; cf. Sullivan, "A Re-examination of the Religion of the Indus Civilization," *HR*. 4, 1964, p. 117, fn. 8. On the other side of the seal, the same pictograph (perhaps minus one character) occupies the right half, and to the left are represented a man and a woman, the woman seated with hands raised as if in supplication but both the legs apparently to one side, and the man on the left, standing with a sickle-like weapon in his hand, appearing to threaten the woman. Marshall interpreted this scene as a representation of human sacrifice, and both Wheeler and Sullivan (*op. cit*) seem to agree; esp. cf. Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p. 117, and 10. Picard, unaware of later historical evidence which subsequently came to light in India, made greater and more specialized use of the Harappa evidence to reconstruct the cult of a Mother Goddess baring her sexual parts in the ancient world; see below.

[5] *JRAI*, LXIV, 1934, pp. 93-100, with illustrations.

[6] Murray has classified the Sheila-na-gigs of mediaeval churches in the British Isles under her Baubo type; see *JRAI*, LXIV, pp. 97 ff.. It may be mentioned that even though Murray borrows an Indian word to identify her third type, she does not use any Indian specimens to illustrate this or the first two types.

Referring to Murray's Baubo-type, Codrington noticed a small terracotta figure in the form of a toad in the India Museum, London, cast from a double mould, the underside of which displays a similar squatting goddess (**Figs. 2, 3**).[7] If the identification with Baubo was certain, he felt, this little figurine would be "possibly the only directly borrowed classical icon known to Indian archaeology". On the basis of associated acquisitions in the Museum, Codrington was certain that the figure came from Mathura and is to be dated in the early 2nd century A.D., and, since the theme of his short paper was to emphasize the emergence of Indian iconography in this period, especially at Mathura which had close contact with centres in the North-west where the hybrid art-forms of the Gandhara school were appearing, he no doubt implied that the Classical Baubo may have been imported into India in this period.[8]

An image of a nude squatting goddess, preserved in the Museum of Alampur in Southern Deccan, has been published by Stella Kramrisch (**Fig. 4**).[9] Carved in a dark stone with excellent finish and worked to a high degree of polish, this figure is a remarkable piece of art and deserves all the encomium lavished on it by Kramrisch. It represents a female form lying facing upwards on a nearly square plane. The figure is entirely nude except for the armlets on the upper arms, widely-spaced bracelets at the wrists and thin anklets, all shaped as serpent-coils, and a small bead-necklace on the chest. The broadly spread out legs are drawn up laterally and bent at the knees, framing the gently swelling abdomen and "bud-like" opening of the sex below. The arms are bent upwards, elbows resting on the knees, and the hands, each holding a lotus-bud, are laid on the shoulders. As its neck and head, a fully-blossomed lotus crowns the image, and the nipples on the gently flattened breasts also take lotus-shapes. On stylistic considerations, Kamrisch dated the image approximately to the 8th century A.D., and thought that it might have belonged originally to one of the local sanctuaries.[10] That the image was actually meant for worship seems to be suggested by the provision of spouts on either side of the figure to allow the water poured during worship to be drained off.[11] Its cultic significance is also indicated by the size of the figure, which along with its support measures 36″×40″.[12]

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7. Codrington, "Iconography: Classical and Indian," *Man*, XXXV, May 1935, pp. 55-6, with accompanying plate.
8. With reference to Murray's Baubo-type, Dasgupta also (see *Man*, XXXVI, Oct. 1936, pp. 183-4), pointed to a terracotta figure of the "Iron age" from Nilgiri in Foote's *Catalogue of Pre-historic Antiquities in the Government Museum, Madras* (1901), p. 48, pl. iii, 542, but from the published photograph it does not look like the true Baubo-type. Cf. also by the same author, *Origin and Evolution of Indian Clay Sculpture*, p. 17. Impressed by Murray's classification, Dasgupta frequently speaks in this work of a "Baubo-type" for figurines of the Indus valley, pre-Maurya, Maurya and Śuṅga periods, but does not cite a single true specimen of the type; see *ibid*., pp. 80, 134, 173-4, 254.
9. Kramrisch, Stella, "An Image of Aditi Uttānapad," *Art. As*., XIX, 1956, pp. 259-70, with illustrations.
10. Ajit Mookerjee illustrates this image in his *Tantra Art*, etc., pl. 58. He arbitrarily dates it to 11th century A.D. and labels it as *Ādyā-Śakti*.
11. A spout is clear on the proper left of the image, but there may also have been a similar spout on the right rim, which is damaged.
12. In a letter to the author dated Aug. 10-11, 1972 (to be cited again below), Dr. Kramrisch writes that during a visit to Alampur after the publication of her "Aditi" paper, she was shown into an exceedingly low sanctuary attached to a structure. One had to crawl to enter the sanctuary hardly larger than the image of the "Nude Squatting Goddess" which it housed. She had not seent his image before, and the priest told her that it represented Elamma, whom he sanskritized as "Pṛthvī."

Without referring to Murray's Baubo-type figures or the suggestion of Codrington that the Classical Baubo may have been introduced into India, Kramrisch has tried to explain the figure as a purely Indian phenomenon. She has laid stress on the two obvious elements of the figure: the depiction of a majestic female form in the throes of giving birth and the close association of lotus with it. Noting that the iconography of the image has no known parallel,[13] Kramrisch nevertheless picks out its two conspicuous elements to find archaeological and literary correspondences and ascertain the meaning of the sculpture. For parallel art specimens, she points in the main to the fragment of an approximately contemporary image of a goddess from Mahākūṭa (south-western Deccan) who is lotus-headed and holds a lotus flower in each hand, to the two terracotta plaques from Bhīṭā and Kosam already noticed by Marshall, to a relief composition in Stūpa no. 2 at Sanchi showing lotus plants with buds and flowers, where the stalk of the crowing lotus by its breadth and curvaceous contour gives to her the impression of lithe female limbs, and to two painted pot-sherds from Mohenjodaro with a circle of lotus petals around the necks. Since the lotus-flower, born from water and mud, yet impressive in the purity of its bloom and subtlety of its fragrance, has remained a perennial symbol of creativity in Indian art and culture, Kramrisch finds it in remarkable agreement with the conception of the birth-giving Mother of the Alampur figure. She also notes that in India, the lotus was conceived as foremost of all plants, and plants in the Vedic culture were conceived as goddesses, nourishing, life-giving mothers.[14]

In Indian art, the anthropomorphic equivalent of the lotus-flower is the goddess Padmaśrī-Lakṣmī, who is so frequently depicted on the railings and gateways of the Bharhut and Sanchi stūpas and who, already in the *Śrī-sūkta* in the *Khila* of the *Ṛg-veda*, is intimately connected with the lotus. In classical Sanskrit and iconographic texts, the goddess dwells in a lotus-pond, stands or sits on a lotus, and always carries a lotus flower in her hand.[15] There is no textual warrant, however, that a lotus flower should replace the head and face of the goddess. The statement in some iconographic texts that a beautiful lotus should be made on the head of the goddess is apparently to be understood as the description of the head decoration.[16] Again even though Śrī-Lakṣmī may have been originally a fertility goddess worshipped for the growth of crops and cattle, *etc.*,[17] there is no evidence, literary or archaeological, that she was ever conceived of as having the nudity and the posture of the Alampur figure. In fact, she is noted in the classical Sanskrit literature and iconographic texts not only for her sweet face and beautiful form but also for her charming dress and rich ornaments, and frequently serves as the model of beauty for mortal princesses and heroines.[18] Kramrisch herself seems to have been aware of these limitations. Although she found close parallels between the lotus-headed image from Alampur and the rich, life-giving Padmaśrī-Lakṣmī, yet conscious that the female figure in the throes of giving birth conveys "a deeper message and a more primal vision", she finally suggested identification with the "Aditi Uttānapad" of the *Ṛg-veda*.[19]

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[13] Kramrisch makes this comment even though she herself refers to earlier specimens from Bhīṭā and Kosam, and a later one from Mahākūṭa which, however, is fragmentary.

[14] *TS*, IV. 2.6, as quoted by Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, *Art. As.*, XIX, pp. 265-6.

[15] For the *Śrī-sūkta*, see *RV*, *Khila*, II.6, esp. vv.4, 5 and 11; also 13-4. For Śrī-Lakṣmī's association with lotus in general, see Scheftelowitz, "Śrīsūkta", *ZDMG*, 75, 1921, p. 38; Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography-II: Śrī-Lakṣmī", *EA*, I, 1928-9, pp. 177-8; Hartmann, *Beitrage zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmī*, pp. 1, 6-8, 31, *etc.*. On the symbolism of the lotus, see Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, pp. 103-4 and references cited there; also Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, II, pp. 23, 26, 56 ff.; Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols, etc.*, pp. 90 ff.; Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, *Art. As.*, XIX, pp. 264 ff..

[16] *Viṣ. Dh. P.*, III.81.8: *Devyāśca mastake padmaṁ tathā kāryaṁ manoharam*; also cited by Hemādri, see Rao, *EHI*, II, pt. 2, App. C, p. 134; cf. also, *Śiraso maṇḍanaṁ śaṅkhacakrasīmāntapaṅkajam*, as in *Aṁśumadbhedāgama* and *Pūrvakāraṇāgama*, cited by Rao, *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 135.

[17] See Scheftelowitz, Hartmann, Gonda and Zimmer, *op. cit.*, (fn. 15 above).

Aditi in the *Ṛg-veda* appears as the primal female energy, the source from which everything is born, as identical with whatever has been and whatever shall be.[20] Emphasis is always laid on the motherhood of Aditi.[21] Specially the mother of the Ādityas, she is the mother of the gods in general, and of all beings. Perhaps earlier distinguished from Pṛthivī, she is constantly identified with her in the later Vedic literature.[22]

Kramrisch was obviously persuaded to her suggested identification by the reference to *Uttānapad* in a late hymn of the *Ṛg-veda*.[23] She translates the two relevant stanzas, where the world occurs, as: "In the stage of the gods, the existent was born from the non-existent. After this the regions were born. This [existent] was born of her with the legs spread open. From Aditi Dakṣa was born and from Dakṣa Aditi".[24] In her opinion, Aditi is here identical with *Uttānapad* and the two stanzas apparently describe the mysterious process of creation from Aditi. Kramrisch also notes that when Norman Brown saw the photograph of the Alampur image, he immediately pointed to this *Ṛg-vedic* hymn.[25]

While there does not seem to be much ambiguity about the literal meaning of the word *Uttānapad i.e.*, "one with the legs spread open", different opinions have been expressed about its precise meaning in the context.[26] According to the Norman Brown himself, whose verbal approval is cited by Kramrisch but who later expressed himself in a different context on the stanzas under reference, two parallel creations seem to be described in the hymn, *viz.*, of the material universe from *Asat* which was made by Brahmaṇaspati, and of the sentient beings from the primal potentialities, Dakṣa and Aditi. He understands *Uttānapad* as referring to *Asat* and used as feminine in the sense of one whose legs are stretched apart in parturition.[27] It is, therefore, not quite certain that *Uttānapad* in *RV.*, X. 72.3-4 necessarily refers to Aditi. As a matter of fact, the whole hymn, addressed to gods in general and purporting to describe the process of creation, is quite obscure.[28] But, whether or not *Uttānapad* in *RV.*, X. 72.3-4 refers to Aditi, it is not improbable for the creatrix Mother Aditi to be described in such a manner. Elsewhere in the *Ṛg-veda*, she is described as widely-spread (*uru-vyacāḥ*)[29] and there are references to her lap, womb or sex (*garbha*, *upastha*) in the context of her role as birth-giving Mother.[30] Pṛthivī, with whom Aditi is so often identified in later Vedic literature, is herself conceived of as the wide one, capacious, widely spread, bounteous, *etc.*.[31] There is no doubt, therefore, that if a Vedic parallel for the remarkable Alampur figure is to be found at all, the concept of Aditi-Pṛthivī would be more appropriate than that of Padmaśrī-Lakṣmī, especially as the universal motherhood of Śri-Lakṣmī appears to have been a late development in her character.[32] On closer analysis, however, as we shall see, the identification suggested by Kramrisch appears untenable.[33]

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[18] The goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī is described as *kañcukācchādistanī*, *śobhanāmbaraveṣṭitā* and *sarvābharaṇabhūṣitā* in *Aṁśumadbhedāgama*, *śvetavastra-vibhūṣitā*, *kañcukābaddhagātrī*, *etc.* in the texts cited in *Śilparatna*, *divyarūpāmbaradharā*, *sarvābharaṇabhūṣitā*, *etc.*, in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, and *kañcukācchādistanī* and *śobhanāmbarasampannā* in *Pūrvakāraṇāgama*; see Rao, *op. cit.*, pp. 133 ff..

[19] Kramrisch, *Art. As.*, XIX, pp. 267-8.

[20] Kramrisch herself cites several significant passages in early and later Vedic literature to prove her point. For the conception of Aditi in the Vedic religion in general, see Macdonell, *VM*, pp. 120-3; Keith, *RPVU*, vol. I, pp. 215-8; Muir, *OST*, V, pp. 35-53; also Agrawala, V.S., "Aditi and the Great Goddess," *IC*, IV, no. 4, 1938, pp. 401 ff.

[21] See esp. Agrawala, cited in fn. 20 above.

[22] *Ibid.*, and Muir, cited in fn. 20 above.

[23] See Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, *Art. As.*, XIX, p. 268.

[24] *RV.*, X.72.3-4:

Devānāṁ yuge prathame'sataḥ sadajāyata,
Tadāśā anvajāyanta taduttānapadaspari. 3
Bhūrjajña uttānapado bhuva āśā ajāyanta,
Aditerdakṣo ajāyata dakṣādvaditiḥ pari. 4

[25] See *Art. As.*, XIX, p. 268, fn. 27.

[26] See *RV*, tr. Griffith, vol. II, p. 486, note on X.72.3; cf. also *ibid.*, tr. Geldner, vol. III, pp. 250-1, fn. 3cd. Sāyaṇa explains *Uttānapad* as: *uttānamūrdhvatānaṁ padyanta ityuttānapado vṛkṣāḥ*; see *RV*, ed. Sontakke and Kashikar, vol. IV, p. 538.

27. See Norman Brown, "Theories of Creation in the Rig Veda", *JAOS*, 85 (1965), pp. 26, 29-30.
28. Cf. Muir, *OST*, V, p. 48.
29. *RV*, V.46.6; cf. also *TB*, II.4.2.7: *Senā ha nāma pṛthivī dhanaṁjayā viśvavyacā aditiḥ sūryatvak*. For Aditi as spacious, far-extending, see *RV*, I.72.9; *VS*, XXI.5.
30. See *RV*, VI.67.4; IX.74.5; X.5.7. This tradition is retained also in the classical Sanskrit literature; cf. *aditijaṭharamivā'nekadevakulādhyāsitaṁ*, said of the city of Pāṭaliputra in the *Vāsavadattā* of Subandhu; see *Vāsavadattā*, tr. Gray, pp. 79 and 162.
31. Several such references are cited by Kramrisch; see, however, *AV*, XII. 1.2, 12; *VS*, XIII.17. The word *Pṛthivī* literally means the broad one, wide one.
32. Śrī-Lakṣmī obtains her universal motherhood mainly in the Viṣṇuite theology as reflected in the Viṣṇuite *Purāṇas* and the *Saṁhitās*, and the development is fully intelligible only in the background of the theoretical systematization of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess. Her association with Viṣṇu also seems to have been a late development in her history. At whatever period this association may have taken place, it does not seem to have been popular much before the younger portions of the *Mahābhārata*; see Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 223; Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, *EA*, I, pp. 175, 178; also Hartmann, *Beitrage zur Geschichte der Göttin Lakṣmī*, p. 25. It is interesting to see that the line giving the names *Lokaṁātā* and *Mā* to *Śrī-Lakṣmī* in the *NSP*. edn. of the *Amarakoṣa* with the commentary of Maheśvara is not found in the Trivandrum edn. of the text with Sarvānanda's commentary and the earlier Bombay edn. with the commentary of Bhānujī Dīkṣita; see Hartmann, *op. cit* , p. 1.
33. See below. Dr. Stella Kramrisch happened to read our discussion in the original dissertation and was kind to send us a note on Aug. 10-11, 1972, elaborating her view-point and also saying that in linking the nude goddess with Aditi, she meant to place her into the Indian ambience, but that she did not mean to give her this name iconographically. We appreciate the distinction. Miss Kramrisch makes her approach to the entire problem clear in her subsequent fuller paper : "The Indian Great Goddess", *HR*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (May, 1975), pp. 235-265. However, since the Aditi-Uttānpad label, whether iconographic or not, is important, we have decided to retain our original comments. Miss Kramrisch's full notes on the lotus-head, contained in her letter, will be reproduced below.

H.D. Sankalia has expressed himself on the subject more than once. In his earliest writing, he published about half a dozen other specimens of the nude goddess and tried to strengthen Codrington's suggestion of foreign inspiration.[34] Apart from the figures already noticed, he listed the following others of "Baubo-type", all from the Deccan:

1. A terracotta figure from Ter (Osmanabad Distt., Maharashtra; **Fig. 5**), cast in a single mould with a fine finish and red polish all over. The female figure is portrayed seated in the Baubo-pose. It is entirely nude except for the beaded necklace around the neck, a thick girdle around the waist and heavy anklets. It is intentionally made headless and the two arms are supposed to be at the sides. The figure was a surface find, but on the basis of associated pot-sherds of ascertainable dates, Sankalia confidently assigns it to the 1st-2nd century A.D.

2. A similar terracotta figure (**Fig. 6**) from the same site but from controlled excavations and thus dateable to the 1st-3rd century A.D. This figure, too, is headless, but it is difficult to ascertain the position of the arms. There appears to be a large number of beaded girdles around the waist, and the torso, much shortened, seems to be rounded above in a stump. Four rosettes are placed at the corners, the two on the top roughly occupying the position where the hands would be if they were depicted raised upwards as in the Bhīṭā figure.

3. A headless terracotta figure in relief from Nagarjunikonda (Guntur Dist., Andhra Pradesh; **Fig. 7**), where the rounded torso is depicted as a solid mass, which suggested to Sankalia the shape of a stūpa.[35]

4. A stone relief figure from Nevasa excavations (Ahmadnagar Dist., Maharashtra; **Fig. 8**), dateable to c. 100-300 A.D. The carved female nude appears as a highly abbreviated Baubo-type, with the rounded stump-like torso drastically shortened and the entire figure with its spreadeagled thighs and only vaguely suggested lower legs forming an inverted triangle in outline.

5. A tiny stone sculpture from Vadgaon (near Satara, Maharashtra; **Fig. 9**). The headless female depicted is exactly similar in composition and outline to the stone relief from Nevasa excavations, described above, with the very significant addition of a bull to its right, suggesting that this goddess might have been conceived of as a form of Durgā or Pārvatī. Although Sankalia does not date the figure, there is no doubt that it belongs to the same age as the figure from Nevasa.

6. Relief sculpture of a nude goddess in a cave at Siddan Kotte, north of Kelur, in northern Karnatak (Sankalia's figure 6). It is also headless and the torso, which seems to be sharply truncated above the shoulders instead of being rounded, clearly depicts the breasts. The hands are raised upwards as in the Bhīṭā figure. This figure too is not

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[34] Sankalia. H.D., "The Nude Goddess or 'Shameless Woman' in Western Asia, India and South-eastern Asia", *Art. As.*, XXXIII, 1960, pp. 111-23, with illustrations.

[35] Sankalia emphasizes in this context that the piece came from a Buddhist site. In fact, on that basis, he felt that the goddess was also accepted in the Buddhist pantheon; see *Art. As.*, XXIII, p. 114.

dated by Sankalia, but his order of treatment seems to imply that it is not later than the figure, listed below, in the Rāmeśvara Cave at Ellora, *i.e.*, not later than the 8th century A.D.

An interesting piece of information supplied by the late Shri Chapgar (from whose copy in his diary, Sankalia seems to reproduce the illustration) is that the figure is called *Lajjā Gaurī*, and local women, desirous of children, pray to the goddess and worship her by applying butter and red lead on the vulva and the breasts.

7. Relief carving of a goddess with a female attendant on either side in the Cave no. 21 (Rāmeśvara Cave) at Ellora (Sankalia's Fig. 7). Sankalia is uncertain whether it represents the Baubo-type, since, even though the figure is seated in a manner which would emphasize the pudenda, it is not at all clear whether it was intended to be nude, especially as the region of the sexual triangle seems to have been repaired. The two hands of the figure could have been raised upwards but the relief in the illustration appears too damaged to permit verification of this. Incidentally, the attendant females and the possible suggestion of halo behind the head of the central figure seem to leave no room for doubt that the latter represented a goddess.

More recently, following the Inamgaon excavations, Sankalia has again examined the subject.[36] In this excavation were discovered clay and terracotta figures of mother goddess, one in an oval-shaped clay box with lid, which could only be understood as some kind of shrine or sacred container. The figures are rather featureless. They are undoubtedly female, since breasts are clearly recognizable. They are apparently nude and while the one found over the box is headless, the figure inside has a head. They would also appear to be standing, with arms hanging down, rather than seated or squatting. However, with the box were also found a clay bull and a semi-circular clay object, both of which served as some kind of seats for these figures. The semi-circular object clearly served as a stand for the figure inside the box, while the provision of suitable holes suggests that the headless figure was made to sit on the bull. Sankalia now thinks that our nude goddess may be connected to these ancient specimens. He also imagines the possibility of a wide dispersal from the Upper Paleolithic "Venuses" to Near Eastern Neolithic and still later to Middle Eastern and Indian specimens. Clearly, however, he is uncertain with reference to the precise prehistory of the nude squatting goddess of the early historical times in India, because he keeps margin for the possibility of her "re-introduction" in India during the period when trade with the Roman world flourished.

Sankalia's arguments are discussed below in detail. But we may first notice a few other figures of the nude goddess which were either overlooked by him in his original paper or were published after it.

Two figures of the goddess are listed in the recently published *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities*. One is a weathered red sandstone relief plaque of "Kuṣāṇa-

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[36] See Sankalia, H.D., "The Earliest Private Shrine in Western India and Its Relationship with the Mother-goddesses in Europe and Western Asia", *Valcamonica Symposium 72 : Les religions de la Prehistoire* (edizioni Del Centro, 1975), pp. 457-461.

Gupta" period from Kauśāmbī.[37] It shows a seated female figure with legs wide open, knees drawn up laterally, elbows resting on knees and left arm raised to shoulder height. As the figure is not illustrated, it is impossible to be certain of many details. The right hand may have been similarly raised but the *Catalogue* does not specify it. Also, while the beaded chain between the breasts and a heavy shape round the neck are noticed, it is not made clear whether the figure is otherwise nude and whether it is with or without a head. However, since a comparison is invited with the terracotta figures from Bhīṭā and Kosam noticed by Marshall, there is no doubt that an identical figure is meant here. Like Marshall, again, the *Catalogue* identifies the figure with the Earth-goddess, Pṛthivī.

The other specimen is a coarse, rectangular, terracotta plaque of Kuṣāṇa date, showing a crudely modelled female squatting with widespread knees and upraised hands (**Fig. 10**).[38] Despite defacement and slight damage, the figure appears entirely nude except for the heavy necklace, and bracelets and anklets. It may have had also a girdle around the waist. The breasts are crudely suggested in the horizontal alignment of the upper arms, and there is no doubt about the head even if the facial features cannot be made out. The illustration labels the figure as "Fertility Goddess".[39]

The above two pieces were published after Sankalia had listed the figures of "Baubo-type" known to him. But a very significant omission by him was a stone figure of the same goddess, with a dedicatory inscription, from Nagarjunikonda (**Fig. 11**).[40] The image is carved in high relief on a white marble slab. The upper part is broken but the lower part, which remains almost intact, leaves no doubt about the identification. It shows a nude seated female with the knees laterally spread and the pudenda clearly marked. There are a series of anklets on each leg and several elaborately carved girdles around the waist. It is difficult to be certain about the position of the arms, the form of the bust and the presence or absence of the head. But the nature of the ornamentation above the girdle, as also the marked similarity to the nude headless goddess from Nevasa and Vadgaon (**Figs. 8 & 9**), and to a certain extent also to the terracotta figures from the Ter excavations (**Fig. 6**) and Nagarjunikonda (**Fig. 7**)[41] suggest that this figure

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37. Gupta (ed.), *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities*, p. 27, no. 29 (Antiquity no. 7606). Red sandstone with white or pale yellow spots was a popular medium in the Mathura art. Could it be that, though discovered at Kauśāmbī, the figure originally came from Mathura ?
38. *Ibid.*, p. 307, no. 145 (Antiquity no. 7716).
39. According to the *Catalogue*, the figure seems to have come from Kauśāmbī. It may be mentioned that S.C. Kala describes another terracotta piece from Kauśāmbī showing a seated nude stretching her legs on both sides, similar to Marshall's Bhīṭā specimen; see Kala, *Terracotta Figurines from Kauśāmbī, etc.*, p. 30 and pl. XVII. C. But we agree with Sankalia that the illustration provided does not make it clear; see *Art. As.*, XXIII, p. 114, fn. 14.
40. Narasimhaswami, H.K., "Nagarjunikonda Image Inscription", *EI*, XXIX, 1951-2 (probably published in 1957), no. 18, pp. 137-9, with pl. facing p. 139.
41. Cf. esp. the rows of wide girdles of the Ter figure with the equally elaborate one in this image. The editor of the inscription finds the ornamental belt around the belly resembling a decorated *pūrṇa-ghaṭa*.

also was headless. Towards the top of the surviving part of the trunk where the image is broken, outlines of what looks like a large lotus flower may be discernible. But even so, its position is not such as to be equated with the lotus-heads in the Bhiṭā and Alampur figures; at the most, it would be part of an ornamental floral decoration.

The short one-line inscription at the base, written in Prakrit in Brāhmī characters of approximately the 3rd century A.D., informs that the image was caused to be made by Mahādevī Khāṁduvulā, who was *avidhavā* and *jīvaputā* and wife of Mahārāja Siri Ehavala Caṁtamūla.[42] The king is probably identical with his namesake who was the son of Siri Vīrapurisadatta of the Ikṣvāku dynasty and is generally placed in the 3rd century A.D.[43] The inscription thus proves beyond any doubt that the nude, squatting female whose figures have been found all over the Deccan and the various sites in North India was not only a popular goddess but also counted among her votaries members of royal families. It should be mentioned that the marble sculpture was discovered buried in debris at the extremity of the remains of a large, many-pillared hall which, the editor of the inscription thought, may have actually enshrined the image.

Three other specimens have come to our notice. One (**Fig. 12**), perhaps of stone, was discovered by Hunter from Mahurjhari, near Nagpur.[44] It is a megalithic site, but Hunter's discoveries, including the present figure, are of the early historic period. The sculpture, described as "*nagna-kabandha*", is unmistakably a representation of the nude squatting goddess. It has a full blown lotus for the head and the hands also apparently hold a lotus each, in the manner of the Alampur figure. The other two (**Figs. 13 & 14**) were acquired for the Central Musuem, Nagpur.[45] There is no doubt also about their identity. They are clearly nude, squatting figures, and both are apparently headless. In the (**Figure 14**), the depiction of the lotus-like device for the head is fairly certain. Perhaps we have the lotus also in the (**Figure 13**) though it is less clear in the reproduction. No information is given about their date or provenance. Stylistically, both appear to belong to the early centuries of the Christian era, and they may be presumed to belong to the general area around Nagpur.[46]

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[42] See *EI*, XXIX, p. 139. The text of the inscription has been read as ;

Sidha [m*]. Mahādēvīya a-vidhavāya j[ī]vaputāya
Mahār[ā]ja-siri-[Ehavala Caṁtamu] la-pati [ya]
Khaṁḍuvulāya kāritāti [.]

[43] See *EI*, XXIX, pp. 138-9; also Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 225-6. Ladies of Ikṣvāku family frequently appear as benefactresses of the Buddhist *mahācaitya* at Nagarjunikonda; see *ibid.*, p. 225.

[44] See Deo, S.B., *Mahurjhari Excavation (1970-72)*, Intro., pp. 1-2 and pl. II, fig. 3. Deo also cites Hunter's account published in 1933: Hunter, G.A.P., "The Antiquities of Mahurjhari", *Śaradāśrama Vārshika*, Śake 1855, ed. Y. K. Deshpande, Yeotmal 1933, pp. 30-35.

[45] See *Indian Archaeology 1969-70—A Review* (1973), p. 75 and pl. LXIV, A and B.

[46] The "exhibitionistic" female figures occasionally appearing on the mediaeval temples, such as those illustrated by Maury (*Folk Origin of Indian Art*, figs. 132-4) do not seem to belong to this class, even though they look like the Sheila-na-gigs of the mediaeval churches in England

(Contd.)

Several significant facts emerge from a survey of the images of the nude squatting goddess in India. To begin with, all the images apparently fall into a distinct class and it seems certain that they represent a goddess who was in active worship. The available specimens show a distribution over North India and the Deccan generally, the greater concentration being in the Deccan; and they range in date approximately from the first to the eighth centuries A.D., the majority probably falling in the earlier part of this period. The fairly large proportion of terracotta specimens would indicate that the nude goddess was essentially a deity of the common people,[47] Nevertheless, she must have been popular enough to have attracted the attention of the higher sections of society, to have retained an almost standard iconography for several centuries and to have excellent stone images carved to represent her, possibly to be installed in independent shrines.

The striking iconographic form of the goddess would have been sufficient reason to suspect that she was connected with fertility, but this seems to be suggested also by the Nagarjunikonda image inscription where a queen is represented as dedicatrix of the goddess' image and is characterized as *avidhavā* "a (not widow", *i.e.*, one whose husband is living) and *jīvaputā* (one whose son or sons are living).[48] It appears that this goddess was essentially a goddess of women who prayed to her for a happy and fruitful marital life. This is also the modern tradition recorded by Chapgar about the Siddan Kotte figure.[49]

It is not easy to form a definite opinion about the precise identification of the nude squatting goddess in India, and there is also no definite clue in regard to her origin and early history. Unfortunately the short dedicatory inscription on the Nagarjunikonda figure does not give the name of the goddess. As we propose to show below, the contemporary Sanskrit literature is perhaps not entirely unaware of her, but the icono graphic textsor similar material in the *Purāṇas etc.*, to our knowledge, do not mention

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and Ireland, which are included by Murray in her "Personified *Yoni* or Baubo type". In fact, it is doubtful if they belong to a strict iconographic pattern at all. Even if they are conceived of as religious figures of some kind, they need to be studied in the general background of the erotic symbolism of mediaeval Hindu temple sculptures, and not as representations of a specific goddess. We believe that the figures discussed in this chapter conform to a more or less strict iconography and, in spite of their nudity and peculiar posture of the legs, cannot be labelled as exhibitionistic.

[47] With respect to the figure from Mathura, Codrington noted that its being pressed from a mould indicated demand in quantity; see *Man*, XXXV, p. 65. Sankalia specifically noted about one specimen from Ter that it was made from a mould.

[48] It must be noted that the expressions *Jīvaputā*, *Jivayutā* or *Jīvaputrapautrā* have been used in inscriptions elsewhere to characterize ladies whose children were living, and also in literature, these, as well as *avidhavā*, are used of married ladies either in simple descriptions of them or as auspicious modes of addressing them; see *EI*, XXIX, p. 139 and fns. 3 and 4. But, in the present instance, the epithets seem to take an added meaning. In any case, even in the most casual and innocent use of these epithets for married ladies, the sentiment of fullness and fertility can always be suspected as the basic element.

[49] See above, p. 189.

such a goddes, either with or without the name Aditi.[50] In fact, even while Aditi lives in brahamanical Purāṇic mythology,[51] we do not find any descriptions of her iconographic form as an independent goddess[52] and there is no indication that she was ever actively worshipped in post-Vedic times.[53]

Aditi, as we have already seen, is among the prominent goddesses of the *Ṛg-veda*. Her conception, probably more than that of any other early Vedic goddess, comes closest to the idea of the primeval Great Mother. In fact, so great is the attention towards her name and form in the Vedic pantheon that modern scholars, when attempting to trace the history of the Śakti-cult of historic India often fall back upon her name,[54] and she is sometimes even utilized to reconstruct the history of the Great Mother in proto-historic times in Western Asia and Iran. Thus Przyluski has tried to establish doubtful etymological relations between Aditi and Anaiitis, Artemis and Anāhitā,[55] and Coomaraswamy, looking for a name for the standing nude goddess represented in early Indian terracottas, also suggested Aditi.[56] The fact remains, however, that the history of Aditi as a living goddess is confined to the Vedic period, and any identification of a later historical figure with her, and even more, any attribution of a specific iconographic form to her, is purely conjectural.

The Vedic word *Uttānapad* would no doubt appear as an accurate graphic description of the nude squatting goddess, but this does not warrant that she was called *Uttānapad* or was identified with Vedic Aditi. It should also be borne in mind that the iconography of the squatting goddess, despite its characteristic singularity, is of the simplest kind, and, therefore, whatever her early history, if any, on the Indian soil, if she was really conceived as Aditi Uttānapad during the period of her popularity in India, it is difficult to understand why the brahmanical iconographic texts are silent about her name and form.[57] It appears, therefore, that the identification of the nude goddess with the so-called "Aditi Uttānapad" of the *Ṛg-veda* has to be given up.

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[50] Iconographic texts, to our knowledge, are also unaware of a goddess called *Lajjā Gaurī*. However, for possible survivals of the form of the nude squatting goddess, see below.,

[51] Aditi sometimes appears in the *Purāṇas* as the mother of Indra and Viṣṇu in the context of the origin of the Vāmana incarnation of the latter; see Rao, *EHI*, II, pt. I, pp. 161-3. In the post-Vedic mythology, generally speaking, she is the daughter of Dakṣa, and the mother of Vivasvant and Viṣṇu, and of the gods generally; cf. Keith, *RPVU*, p. 215. The *deva-mātṛ*, "mother of the gods", frequently appearing in Purāṇic myths must refer to Aditi; cf. Dasgupta, Shashi Bhushan, "Evolution of Mother-worship in India", in Madhavanand and Majumdar (ed.), *Great Women of India*, pp. 51-2. Strangely, Aditi also appears as the name of a Rākṣasa in *Mānasāra*; see Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 207.

[52] We know of only one reference to the figures of Aditi in the iconographic passages of the Purāṇic literature. It occurs in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* and lays down that the figures of the divine mothers Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kāṣṭhā, Danāyu, Siṁhikā, Muni, Kadrū, Krodhā, Turā, Pradhā, Vinatā, Surabhi and Khaśā should be made as "engaged in making images"; see Shah, *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Third Khaṇḍa*, vol. II, p. 226. The reference, to say the least, is a curious one, and, naturally, no images of this type are known. In any case, it provides no evidence of a cult of Aditi.

[53] Cf. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*

[54] *Ibid.*; cf. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 490.

[55] Przyluski, Jean, "The Great Goddess in India and Iran", *IHQ*, X, 1934, pp. 405-30, esp, 412 ff. Keith doubted this equation; see "The Āśvins and the Great Goddess", *IC*, III, pp. 721-30.

[56] Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas", *Mārg*, VI, no. 2, pp. 22-35, esp. 32-3.

If for a moment, the headlessness alone of the nude goddess were to be considered, another Vedic figure, Nirṛti, may also be noticed, because the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* once calls her headless. In this text, the god Agni is prayed to "remove from here the headless (*viśīrṣṇī*) and vulture-headed (*gṛdhra-śīrṣṇī*) Nirṛti, and Sāyaṇa explains *viśīrṣṇī* as *śirorahitām*.[58] Nirṛti, literally "dissolution" or "misfortune", already appears in *Ṛg-veda* as a personification presiding over death. She retains this character throughout the Vedic texts and appears in many rites, all of which betray marked peculiarities and often bear inauspicious or apotropaic character.[59] She naturally appears to be a little more important in the *Atharva-veda*, where she is also brought in relation with another evil character, Arāti ("avarice", "niggardliness"), who incidentally is also called naked.[60] Nirṛti is sometimes also identified with earth.[61] But we cannot build much on the basis of identifications with Pṛthivī and Arāti, and if we have to look for genuine anticipations, we must consider the essential character and attributes of Nirṛti. As it is, decay and death is the essential character of this goddess, whereas the character of the nude squatting goddess appears to be of the creatrix, birth-giving mother. Any equation between the two therefore, appears unthinkable. It seems impossible even to imagine a euphemistic change, as it probably happened in the case of Rudra becoming Śiva,[62] obstacle-creating Vināyakas

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57. While the study of Indian iconography is of the utmost importance for the history of the cults of various gods and goddesses, it has also a very significant limitation. It would appear that in the mediaeval period many complex iconographic forms emerged purely as a result of the enthusiasm of priests and patrons or the fertile imagination of the artist. It is difficult to imagine, for instance, that the "24-forms" (*caturviṁśatimūrtayaḥ*) of Viṣṇu, which are distinguished from each other only by a permutation and combination of the four attributes in the four hands of the deity (see Bidyabinod, *Varieties of the Viṣṇu Image*, *MASI*, 2; Rao, *EHI*, I, pt. I, pp. 227 ff.; Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 410-2), had any real meaning for the worshipper. The mediaeval authors of sectarian and iconographic texts seem to have conceived of forms of deities which were never really represented for worship. On the other hand, many complex images may have been created first before they were standardized in an iconographic text, and this may be the reason why icons are occasionally found for which no textual sanction is available. The question, however, is very different in the case of a figure of very simple iconography and relatively early date. If such a figure is attributed to a learned tradition, it is natural to expect reference to it in the appropriate texts emerging from that tradition.
58. *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, I.28. The relevant line reads: *Vīśīrṣṇī gṛdhraśīrṣṇī ca apeto nirṛtiṁ hathaḥ*. Sāyaṇa further qualifies Nirṛti with the words *rākṣasīm* and *alakṣmīm*. Incidently, Agni himself is once described in the *Ṛg-veda* as footless and headless, apparently a metaphorical description of fire; see Macdonell, *VM*, p. 88.
59. For Nirṛti, see Macdonell, *VM*, p. 120; Keith, *RPVU*, p. 211-2, 266 ff. For Nirṛti's place in the royal consecration ritual, see, Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, pp. 15 ff. *Kauśika-sūtra* 18.1 ff. describes a *Nirṛti-karma*; see also *ibid.*, 47.16 and 97.1, 7 and 8 (Bloomfield, ed., *The Kauśika-sūtra of Atharva Veda*, pp. 48 ff., 134 and 251-2); Deo, Prafulla Chandra Bhanj, "Piśitāśanā", *JAS*, *L*, XX, no. 1, 1954, pp. 1-5.
60. For Nirṛti in *Atharva Veda*, see Shende, "*The Foundations of Atharvaṇic Religion*", *BDCRI*, IX, nos. 3-4, March 1949, p. 330, paras 38 and 39; also *AV*, 5.7.8 and 9.
61. Several Vedic texts suggest it; see Heesterman, *op. cit.*, and Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony*, pp. 80 ff.
62. Cf. Keith, *RPVU*, p. 146.

becoming obstacle-removers,[63] or the ogress Mātṛs becoming protecting Mothers;[64] for while in these cases the original names and something also of the original characters continued, nothing of that kind seems to be suggested in the present case. Nirṛti may have contributed something to the character of the later goddesses Kālī, Cāmuṇḍā, *etc.*, but actually, she all but disappears in the epic-Purāṇic times.[65] There is a Nirṛti among the eight guardians of quarters (*Dikpālas*), so frequently carved on the outside walls of mediaeval Hindu temples, but he is a male god.[66] A Vedic origin of the nude squatting goddess seems very unlikely indeed even if it could be proved that she is of longer history in India than when her representations first appear after the Christian era or is to be related to the figure on the Harappa seal noted by Marshall or the Inamgaon goddess as suggested by Sankalia.

It has been suggested above that the contemporary Sanskrit literature is perhaps not entirely unaware of the nude squatting goddess. We believe that the *Matsya Purāṇa* makes a reference to this goddess. The context is of the gods beseeching Brahmā for the destruction of the demon Tāraka, and Brahmā advising them to bring about the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, whose son would accomplish their purpose.[67] Brahmā is supposed to have said to the gods: " . . . . At present, Śaṅkara is without a wife. I have earlier spoken to you of the *uttānakaratā* goddess. The goddess will be *uttāna-pāṇi* in order to grant boons. Soon that goddess will be (born as) the daughter of Himācala, and the son born of her from Śiva, like fire from the firewood, will destory Tāraka...."[68] Later, Pārvatī is born at an auspicious moment. She is described as beginning to grow with all the virtues of devas, gandharvas, nāgendras, *etc.*, and gradually captivating and adorning the three worlds with her beauty, fortune and intelligence.[69] However, when Nārada, to whom the gods assign the task of bringing about the union of Śiva and Pārvatī, approaches Himācala and Menā and is asked to read the marks on their daughter's body and predict her future, he replies (*Mat. P.*, 154. 146):

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[63] See Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 147-8.

[64] This has been discussed above, in Ch. III.

[65] See Bhattacharji, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

[66] See Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 526.

[67] Tāraka-vadha episode is a long tract in the *Purāṇa*. It runs into 15 chapters of uneven length, ch. 146 to 160. Our references come from the ch. 154, which, incidentally, is also the longest one in this episode.

[68] *Mat. P.*, 154.51-3 :

Yaccāham uktavānyasyā hy uttānakaratā sadā,
Uttāno varadaḥ pāṇir eṣa devyāḥ sadaiva tu. 51.
Himācalasya duhitā sā tu devī bhaviṣyati,
Tasyāḥ sakāśād yaḥ śarvas tv araṇyāṁ pāvako yathā. 52
Janayiṣyati taṁ prāpya tārako'bhibhaviṣyati,
Mamāpyupāyaḥ sa kṛto yathaivaṁ hi bhaviṣyati. 53

There is in fact no earlier reference to the goddess in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.

[69] *Ibid.*, vv. 96 ff., esp. 109-10.

Na jāto'syāḥ patirbhadre lakṣaṇaiśca vivarjitā,
Uttānahastā satataṁ caraṇair vyabhicāribhiḥ,
Svacchāyayā bhavīṣyeyaṁ kimanyad bahu bhāṣyate.

On the face of it, it is a very curious prediction. It is also a difficult verse to translate. However, since as we shall presently see, it is part of a deliberate pun, it should be best understood in the light of the explanation later given by the Purāṇa-writer himself. For the present, the verse could be paraphrased as: *Bhadre, asyāḥ patiḥ na jātaḥ. Iyam lakṣaṇaiḥ vivarjitā ca, satatam uttānahastā (ca), svacchāyayā vyabhicāribhiḥ caraṇaiḥ (yuktā ca) bhaviṣyā. Kim anyat bahu bhāṣyate*; and leaving certain key words as they are, it may be rendered as: Dear lady, her husband is not yet born; she will be devoid of marks; she will be always *uttānahastā* and be characterised by *svacchāyā* and *vyabhicārī caraṇa*. The use of instrumental in *vyabhicāribhiḥ caraṇaiḥ*, to be understood as "endowed with" or "characterised by," could be regarded as a normal usage according to Sanskrit grammer.[70] But in *svacchāyayā*, it is rather awkward and obscure, howsoever we may understand this word. The words of the sage shocked the parents, who were deeply distressed to think of their daughter as full of inauspicious marks and, therefore, entirely undeserving of a husband.[71] Nārada then consoled them by saying that their fears were groundless. He explained:[72] Pārvatī's husband is "not born" because he is the eternal, immutable, Supreme God; she is herself devoid of any marks because no marks can express her everlasting good fortune; and she will always be *uttānakaratā* to grant boons to gods, demons and sages. The explanation of goddess' *svacchāyayā vyabhicāriṇau pādau* is less clearly worded. It could either be rendered in the form that the clear, transparent toenails in her lotus-like feet will be reflected by her own light in the jewelled crowns of the prostrating gods and demons and (thus) bear multi-coloured radiance, or that the multi-coloured radiance of the gems in the crowned heads of gods and demons prostrating before her will be reflected by goddess' own light in the transparent toenails of her lotus-like feet. *Chāyā* is to be rendered here not as "shadow," but as "light" or *kānti*.[73] We shall have more to comment on the word *chāyā* and *savacchāyayā* presently. Here, it may only be noted that Himācala is said to have been fully satisfied with Nārada's explanation.[74]

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[70] For the general principle underlying the use of instrumental in Sanskrit grammar and the variety of its usages, see Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar*, paras 278 and ff., pp. 93-5. The plural in *vyabhicāribhiḥ caraṇaiḥ* should be considered loosely used. *Mat. P.*, 154.171 and 190 have the proper dual.

[71] *Mat. P.*, 154.147 ff., esp. 160, 169-73.

[72] *Ibid.*, verses 178-93 :

Na jāto'syāḥ patir devyā yan mayoktaṁ himācala,
Na sa jāto mahādevo bhūtabhavyabhavodbhavaḥ,
Śaraṇyaḥ śāśvataḥ śāśtā śaṅkaraḥ parāmeśvaraḥ. 178
Yaduktaṁ ca mayā devī lakṣaṇair varjitā tava,
Śṛnu tasyāpi vākyasya samyaktvena vīcaraṇam. 185
Lakṣaṇaṁ daiviko hy aṅkaḥ śarīrāvayavāśrayaḥ,
Sarvāyur dhana-saubhāgya-parimāṇa-prakāśakaḥ. 186
Anantasyāprameyasya saubhāgyasyāsya bhūdhara,
Naivāṅko lakṣaṇākāraḥ śarīre saṁvidhīyate. 187
Ato'syā lakṣaṇaṁ gātre śaila nāsti mahāmate,
Yathāham uktavānasyā hy uttānakaratāṁ sadā. 188
Uttāno varadaḥ pāṇir eṣa devyāḥ sadaiva tu,
Surāsura-munitrāta-varadeyaṁ bhaviṣyati. 189
Yathā proktaṁ tadā pādau svacchāyāvyabhicāriṇau,
Asyāḥ śṛṇu mamātyāpi vāgyuktiṁ śailasattama. 190
Caraṇau padmasaṅkāśāv asyāḥ svacchanakhojjvalau,
Sarāsurāṇāṁ namatāṁ kirīṭa-maṇi-kāntibhiḥ. 191
Vicitravarṇair bhāsantau svacchāyā-pratibimbitau,
Bhāryā jagadguror hy eṣā vṛṣāṅkasya mahīdhara. 192
Jananī dharmalokasya sambhūtā bhūtabhāvanī,
Śiveyaṁ pāvanāyaiva tvat kṣetre pāvakadyutiḥ. 193

The line 189(a) is already anticipated in Brahmā's statement cited above.

When we study Nārada's enigmatic prediction and its later explanation together, certain things become obvious. Pārvatī's husband is "not born", she will be devoid of *lakṣaṇa* or marks, will always be *uttānahastā* and be characterised by *vyabhicārī caraṇa* and *svacchāyā* are all independent and important elements of the prophecy. This thing becomes clear also from Himācala's long lament on first hearing the prediction. The first of the above, *i.e.*, her husband is "not born", is only a piece of information about her future, and the prediction and its later explanation together form a satisfactory pun. The remaining elements are rather descriptive of Pārvatī's form. Here too, *lakṣaṇaiśca vivarjitā* in the original prediction is to be understood as *śubhalakṣaṇaiśca vivarjitā*, *i.e.*, devoid of auspicious marks, as is actually understood by Pārvatī's father. Its later explanation by Nārada also, therefore, forms a quite satisfactory pun. The same, however, cannot be said about the remaining elements.

We may first understand how the author himself has constructed his puns with reference to these other elements, before we add our own comments to them. From its later explanation as *varada-hastā*, we are apparently supposed to understand *uttāna-hastā* in the original prediction as one with hands stretched out for begging. Himācala too understands it that way, for he says to Nārada: You have described my daughter as *uttāna-hastā*, but the fortunate and rich do not accept presents in return.[75] *Vyabhicāribhiḥ caraṇaiḥ* and *svacchāyayā* in the original prediction must be understood as connected. This is suggested not only by their grammatical forms, but also from the contexts in which they appear both in the father's lament and the sage's consolation.[76] However, neither their connection nor their meanings become immediately obvious. Since, in the later explanation, the sense of the multi-coloured reflections of goddess' toe-nails in the jewelled crowns of gods and demons, or alternatively of the multi-coloured reflections of jewelled crowns of gods and demons in goddess' toe-nails, gives the impression of her constantly moving feet, even though they are really stationary, *vyabhicāribhiḥ caraṇaiḥ* in the original prediction should be understood as straying feet, feet moving hither and thither, perhaps in beggary. In this way, it may also be supposed to agree with the sense of begging given to *uttāna-hastā*. But how is *svacchāyayā* to be connected with the straying feet and given a pejorative sense would remain uncertain. It could be said that contrasted with the sense of "own light" in the later explanation, the word bears the meaning of "shadow" in the original prediction and serves to accentuate the effect of the straying feet, since constant movement and changeability are characteristic of shadow.

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[73] See *Amara-koṣa*, s. v. *chāyā* (line 2650).

[74] *Mat. P.*, 154.195 ff.

[75] *Ibid.*, verse 170b-171a :

Uttānahastatā proktā yācatāmeva nityadā,
Śubhodayānāṁ dhanyānāṁ na kadācit prayacchatām.

[76] *Ibid.*, verses 171 and 190. The latter is cited above. The line 171b reads :

Svacchāyayā', syāścaraṇau, tvayoktau vyabhicāriṇau.

A perusal of the entire Tāraka-vadha episode impresses no doubt that Nārada's peculiar prophecy has its specific function, *viz.*, to shock the parents in order to persuade them to offer their daughter in marriage to Śiva, who would not normally have been acceptable to them as a groom. But it does not appear that the Purāṇa-writer has constructed entirely happy and successful word-plays to achieve that effect. The puns on the words *uttāna-hastā*, *vyabhicāribhiḥ caraṇaiḥ* and *svacchāyayā* would appear to be somewhat unnatural and laboured, and this not so much because the double meanings imputed to these expressions are in themselves inadmissible, but because the puns as a whole appear abnormal and inapplicable to Pārvatī for whom they are meant. It is true that *uttāna-hastā* is used in Vedic literature, more than once, and there it always bears the sense of hands stretched out or above, or raised, in salutation to gods or offering gifts to them.[77] This would seem to agree with the etymological derivation of the word, *ut+tan*, since the prefix *ut* is commonly used in the sense of up or above.[78] But Sanskrit prefixes take on various meanings and their precise sense is ascertainable often only in their actual usages. It could be that the word *uttānahasta* in later history became quite neutral, suggesting simply hands stretched out, and not necessarily stretched above or raised, whether in salutation or worship or for any other purpose. It is possible to imagine, therefore, that a pun, as in the *Matsya-Purāṇa*, could be constructed on the basis of it. Utpala, the commentator of *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, does explain *varada* pose as: *uttāno 'dho' ṅgulirhasto varadaḥ*, *i.e.*, the pose in which the palm with fingers pointing downwards is shown inside out.[79] But such usages must have been quite uncommon and rare. At least we have never come across uses of *uttāna-hasta* in the sense of begging or granting boons elsewhere in classical Sanskrit literature, and even the well known ancient and

[77] See *RV*, III.14.5; VI. 16.46; VI.63.3 and X.79.2, and Skandasvāmin's, Udgītha's, Veṅkaṭamādhava's and Sāyaṇa's commentaries on them. Veṅkaṭamādhava on VI.16.46 and Udgītha on X.79.2 explain the word as *utkṣipta-hastāḥ*, which has perhaps the more obvious sense of throwing up or raising. Griffith always translates them as lifted, up-lifted or raised hands, and Geldner as outstretched hands ("ausgestreckten Händen"). Grassmann's *Wörterbuch zum Ṛig-veda* gives the same meaning as Geldner.

[78] As seen above, Sāyaṇa explains *uttāna* in *uttānapad* (*RV*, X. 72.3-4) as *ūrdhvatānam*.

[79] As cited in Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 251.

modern Sanskrit lexicons do not seem to list them. Similarly, the meanings given to *vyabhicāribhiḥ caraṇaiḥ* and perhaps also to *svacchāyayā*, though permissible, are rather unusual. But the most serious objection against all these puns would be that there is no known form of Pārvatī to justify them. When Śiva is frequently the butt of satires and jokes, there is his peculiar personality to account for it.[80] Pārvatī's asceticism is a well known Śivaite motif, and even the Tāraka-vadha episode of the *Matsya Purāṇa* contains evidence of it.[81] But she is never a beggar or an aimless roamer.

We are, therefore, faced with the question: what then is the reason for these rather laboured puns of the Purāṇa-writer? Our contention is that the nude squatting goddess and the rapproachment of her popular cult with Śivaism is the real basis of Nārada's prophecy and its later explanation. Looked at in this light, his prophecy also reads like a beautiful iconographic description of our goddess. The goddess is *uttāna-hastā* because her two hands are always raised, and she could be said to be characterised by *vyabhicāribhiḥ caraṇaiḥ* because her feet are going astray, straying away from each other, going in opposite directions, falling apart.[82] The expression *lakṣaṇaiśca vivarjitā*, "devoid of marks", may have been chosen to suggest the utter simplicity of the iconography of the goddess, who has no distinguishing marks, no attributes, save her peculiar form and posture. Perhaps the use of the word *svacchāyayā* also is iconographically meaningful. As noted above, the word *chāyā* not only conveys the sense of shadow, but also of light, effulgence. It's parallel meanings are reflection, likeness, manifested likeness or image.[83] *Svacchāyayā* in Nārada's prediction, therefore, may suggest that the goddess will be characterised by her own special form, her peculiar iconography.

The agency of Nārada in effecting the union of Śiva and Pārvatī must have been a

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80. Śiva, indeed, is very frequently target of satirical comments : see, *e.g.*, *Mat. P.*, 154. 329 ff. and Ch. 155.

81. *Ibid.*, 154. 301 ff. It is to be united with her lord Śiva that Pārvatī performs severe asceticism. *Matsya Purāṇa* indeed contains a satirical comment on Pārvatī's dark complexion made by Śiva himself (155.1-2), but the story earlier makes adequate provision to make her black-coloured (154.56 ff, esp. 68-69).

82. See Monier-Williams, *SED*, p. 1032, s.v. *Vyabhicārī* and *Vyabhicārin*.

83. See Coomaraswamy, Anand K., "*Chāyā*", *JAOS*, LV, 1935, pp. 278 ff.; also *AK*, lines 2650 and 2000-1, s.v. *chāyā* and *praticchāyā* respectively; and Monier-Williams, *SED*, s.v. *chāyā*. Cf. an interesting usage of the word in the same episode of the *Matsya Purāṇa* (154.359b-360a) :

Atha nārāyaṇo devaḥ svakāṁ chāyāṁ samāśrayat,
Tatpreritaḥ prakurute janma nānāprakārakam.

Cf. also *Mbh.*, 9.36.10a (Chāyāśca vipulā dṛṣṭvā deva-gandharva-rakṣasām), and 13.40.57b (Aviceṣṭannatiṣṭhad vai chāyevāntargato muniḥ). The expression *chāyopasevanāt* in the Bombay edn. of the epic, 3.32.4 (Yāvad gostanapānāc ca yāvac chāyopasevanāt) is explained by Nīlakaṇṭha as referring to the magical ritual of sticking thorns into the (clay or wax) images of an enemy and thus inflicting pain or death upon him (see also Hopkins, "Magic Observances in the Hindu Epic", *PAPS*, vol. 49, 1910, pp. 24-40, esp. 38-9, and cf. Eng. tr. in P.C. Roy's edn.). But the corresponding reading in the Cr. edn. (3.33.4) has : A mātṛstanapānāc ca yāvacchayyopasarpaṇam.

quite popular motif, for it is noted also in the *Kumārasaṁbhava* of Kālidāsa,[84] but his peculiar prediction about Pārvatī is found only in the above passages of the *Matsya Purāṇa.*[85] If our interpretation of this prediction is acceptable, it would be the only allusion to the nude goddess in contemporary texts. This fact is significant in itself and suggests the alien character of the goddess. But the nature of the Purāṇic allusion to her and the laboured puns also confirm it. Perhaps a touch of irony and disapproval is implied in the expression *lakṣaṇaiśca vivarjitā,* and possibly the words *vyabhicāribhiḥ*

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[84] *Kumārasaṁbhava*, 1.50-1:

Tāṁ nāradaḥ kāmacaraḥ kadācit kanyāṁ kila prekṣya pituḥ samīpe,
Samādideśaikavadhūṁ bhavitrīṁ premṇā śarīrārdhaharāṁ harasya. 50
Guruḥ pragalbhe'pi vayasyato' syās tasthau nivṛttānyavarābhilāṣaḥ,
Ṛte kṛśānor na hi mantrapūtam arhanti tejāṅsyaparāṇi havyam. 51

[85] The whole story is found in almost identical words also in the *Padma Purāṇa*, but, as Hazra has noted (*Purāṇic Records, etc.*, p. 49), the entire Tāraka-vadha episode there is borrowed from the *Matsya. Padma* (ASS), *Sṛṣṭi-Khaṇḍa*, chs. 39-41 (=VSP edn. chs. 44-46), which deal with this episode are borrowed from *Mat. P.*, chs. 146-148 and 153-160, omitting some big chunks of verses from various chapters of the latter; and *Mat. P.*, chs. 149-152 are omitted altogether in the *Padma.* The *Mat. P.*, ch. 154, in which we are here interested, corresponds to *Padma* (ASS), *Sṛ. Kh.*, ch. 40 (=VSP edn. ch. 45). Nārada's prophecy in *Padma* (ASS), *Sṛ. Kh.*, 40. 143-144 has *lakṣaṇaiśca vivarjitaḥ* and *succhāyā'syā* (instead of *lakṣaṇaiśca vivarjitā* and *svacchāyayā*, as in *Matsya*), but these differences are probably due to faulty transmission and are in any case minor. Later explanation in *Padma* (ASS) also (as in verses 168, 182) makes it clear that the former expression applies to Pārvatī, and the verses 187 and 189 actually use the forms *svacchāyā* and *svāṁ chāyāṁ* (v. 170, however, has *succhāyayā*, and VSP edn. has *succhāyayā* and *succhāyau* uniformly). By the way, Brahmā's advance intimation about the *uttāna-karatā* goddess, in *Mat. P.*, 154.51, is absent in *Padma*, as is a large group of its verses later, nos. 447-485, which describe Śiva's marriage procession; these may be later additions in the *Matsya* itself, as it was suspected by Hazra for the entire bloc, chs. 149-152.

O'Flaherty also refers to Nārada's prediction in the *Matsya Purāṇa* (*Mat. P.*, 154.146), but putting it parallel with *SkandaP.*, I.2.23.1-59 and *ŚivaP.*, 2.3.8-11, she regards them all as applicable to Śiva; see her *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*, p. 214 and fn. 24. In *Skanda* and *Śiva Purāṇas*, Nārada's prediction does refer to Śiva, but in *Matsya* it clearly refers to Pārvatī. It is interesting that the expression *na jato'syāḥ* is common to *Matsya* and *Skanda. Skanda*, I. 2.24.1-4 do refer to Pārvatī as having her right hand raised, but this is noted by Himācala himself, and when he asked Nārada about it, the latter explained that her hand is raised because she will always be a bestower of fearlessness to all beings (the relevant verses 2-4a read; *Punaḥ kiñcit pravakṣyāmi putryā me dakṣiṇaḥ karaḥ, uttānaḥ kāraṇaṁ kiṁ tacchrotum icchāmi nārada.* 2. *Iti pṛṣṭo'smi śailena prāvocaṁ kāraṇaṁ tadā, sarvadaiva karo hy asyāḥ sarveṣāṁ prāṇināṁ prati.* 3. *Abhayasya pradātā'sāvuttānastu karastataḥ.* 4a. In this continuation are also seen some statements about Pārvatī (*e.g.*, verse 4b-5a) which also appear in *Matsya.* A few words or expressions are common also in *Śiva* and *Skanda Purāṇas.* Otherwise, the wording and the manner of introducing the prediction is different in each. In *Śiva*, the auspicious attributes of Pārvatī are read first before the peculiarities of her would be husband are predicted. The essential element which is common to all is the need for Nārada's intercession and an indirect prediction of Śiva as the future husband of Pārvatī. But it is difficult to ascertain the precise relationship of the three versions. However, in its compactness and organisation, and even relative clarity, the *Matsya Purāṇa* version gives us the impression of being original, *i.e.*, original not only in its uniqueness but also in chronological priority. It may well be that the *Skanda* and *Śiva*, in that order, were reworkings of the *Matsya* version, perhaps for the reason that the latter appeared unnatural or obscure to their authors.

caraṇaiḥ and *svacchāyayā* also have been chosen to suggest the goddess' offensive posture. That the prophecy as a whole was also meant to be evil is evident from the fact that the parents were shocked to hear it.[86] It is obvious, therefore, that the nude goddess to which the *Matsya Purāṇa* seems to allude was essentially a figure alien to the brahmanical tradition. At the same time, she must be assumed to have had an important popular cult of her own, whence attempts were made to absorb her in the brahmanical Śivaite pantheon by regarding her as identical with Pārvatī and as the consort of Śiva. This is suggested also by the Vadgaon figure where the Nandī - Śiva's characteristic emblem–is represented beside the goddess. The Śivaite affiliation of the goddess may be hinted at also if the doubtful figure in the Rāmeśvara cave at Ellora is understood to represent her, because this cave enshrines a Śiva-liṅga and its walls are full of scenes in relief representing Śivaite themes.[87] Chapgar, therefore, appears to refer to the survival of a truly old tradition when he records that the Siddan Kotte figure was worshipped locally as *Lajjā Gaurī*.

It is clear, however, that even by the time of the *Matsya Purāṇa* this absorption was far from complete, and the nude goddess who had already some centuries of history behind her was as yet only on the fringes of Purāṇic Śivaism. When we consider that this *Purāṇa* is the only text which alludes to the goddess, and that too in such an abrupt, awkward manner, the conclusion is forced on us that this goddess, through most of her popular history in India, remained a figure alien to the brahmanical tradition. An unfortunate result of this aspect of her history is that even the name of the goddess is unknown to us.

We have seen that while the figures of the goddess have a wide distribution, there is a greater concentration of them in the Deccan. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the *Matsya Purāṇa* is also often suspected to have been composed in the South, rather the Deccan, especially in the region around the banks of the river Narmadā.[88] Hazra treats the Tāraka-vadha episode of the *Purāṇa* as a later addition and dates it generally before 800 A.D.[89] This will generally agree with the history of the nude squatting goddess as reconstructed by us.[90]

[86] Notice *Mat. P.*, 154.160, uttered by Himācala :

Tvaṁ coktavān sutāyā me śarīre doṣasaṁgraham,
Aho muhyāmi śuṣyāmi glāmi sīdāmi nārada.

[87] See Gupte and Mahajan, *Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad Caves*, pp. 211 ff.

[88] See Dikshitara, *The Matsya Purāṇa- A Study*, pp. 19ff. , esp. 23-4 ; and Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records, etc.* , p. 52 ; see also Kanṭawala, S.G. , "Home of the *Matsya Purāṇa*," *Purāṇa*, III. 1, Jan. 1961, pp. 115-119.

[89] See Hazra, op cit., pp. 49-50.

[90] There is an interesting reference to a naked Yakṣiṇī in the *Manorathapūraṇī* of Buddhaghoṣa. Commenting on the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, V. XXII. 10 (*PTS*. ed. , vol. III, p. 256), where Buddha speaks of the five disadvantages of Madhurā (the modern Mathurā), including its fierce Yakṣas, Buddhghoṣa relates the story that when Buddha was once visiting Mathurā and had entered the outer precincts of the town, a naked Yakṣiṇī stationed herself before him with her two hands (Contd.)

In a recent short-paper, Vishnu Sisodia has published a late mediaeval (18-19th cent. A.D.) brass image of a Jaina goddess from Rajasthan, which he regards as derived from the "Baubo type" figures published by Codrington and Sankalia.[91] In this context, he also puts forward the tentative suggestion that the nude squatting goddess may have been known to the tribal Indian religions long before the 1st century A.D., and Hindu and Jain iconography may have occasionally borrowed from this source. His two arguments are that similar nude female figures are sometimes seen in the modern tribal art of north India, and that the *Āryā-stava* in the *Harivaṁśa* refers to nude goddesses Aparṇā and Nagna-Śavarī as worshipped by Śavaras, Barbaras and Pulindas, all probably primitive tribes.[92]

Sisodia's suggestion may appear attractive on the face but it does not stand close scrutiny. The apocryphal *Aryā-stava* in the *Harivaṁśa* does refer to the Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas as worshippers of the Great Goddess,[93] suggesting that elements of the religious beliefs of such tribes must have been incorporated with her cult. It does not mention Aparṇā or Nagna-Śavarī, but elsewhere in the *Harivaṁśa* and several other *Purāṇas*, Umā-Pārvatī is called Aparṇā.[94] The name Aparṇā may have denoted a goddess who was "not even clad in leaf garments", but, according to the traditional interpretation, it was given to Umā-Pārvatī because she sustained herself in her asceticism without even accepting a leaf as food. A conspicuous Śabara element in the formation of the Great Goddess is adequately corroborated by the Mediaeval tradition of *Śābarotsava* as a variety of the autumnal worship of Durgā.[95] It would not be

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outstretched and her tongue sticking out (. . . . *Ath' ekā micchādiṭṭhikā yakkhinī acelā hutvā dve hatthe pasāretvā jihvaṁ ninnāmetvā dasabalassa purato aṭṭhāsi* . . .). Buddha, apparently disgusted, turned back from the town and took his residence in a monastery outside (*Manorathapūraṇī*, ed. Kopp, PTS. ed., vol. III, p. 329). The same story is related also in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* section of the Gilgit Manuscripts, with the difference that this naked goddess of Mathurā is here called *devatā*, instead of *yakṣiṇī*; see Dutt (ed.), *Gilgit Manuscripts*, Vol. III, pt. I, pp. 14-15. The nakedness and the outspread arms of this Yakṣiṇī or Devatā appear to suggest some parallelism with the nude squatting goddess, but this may be coincidental. In its element of confrontation between a nude ogress and the Buddha and the latter turning away, the story perhaps betrays even greater similarity with that of Koṭavī in the *Purāṇas* (see below, ch. V). The protruding tongue is characteristic of the fearful images of Kālī or her forms.

91. "A Jain Goddess from Rajasthan", *EW*, n. s., 19, nos. 3-4, Sept.-Dec. 1969, pp. 410-2, with illustrations.

92. The well known *Āryā-stava* in the vulgate editions of the *Harivaṁśa* (see *e.g.* *Hv.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., II. 3) does not contain a statement of the type imagined by Sisodia; see below. The author derives his information from Banerjea (*DHI*, p. 491 f.) and seems to have misunderstood him. Incidentally, Banerjea refers to the *Āryā-stava* as *Hv.*, III. 3 which is clearly a misprint for *Hv.* (vul. ed.), II. 3.

93. *Hv.*, Kinjawadekar's edn., II. 3. 7. The Critical edition of the text rejects the *Āryā-stava* as apocryphal; see *Hv.* (Cr. edn.), vol. I, p. 327, note 591.

94. *Hv.*, 13.15-9; also *Vāy.P.*, 72.7-12; *Bra.P.*, III. 10.8-13; see also *Kumārasaṁbhava*, V.28, and *Vāy.P.*, 9.86.

95. For *Śābarotsava*, see Kane, *HD.*, V, pt. I, pp. 176-7.

surprising, therefore, if the Great Goddess was also called by names like Parṇa-Śabarī or Nagna-Śabarī.[96] But all these evidence do not appear to us to be very pertinent to the problem, since we are not dealing with nude goddesses in general but with a very specialized nude goddess with a strongly individualistic iconography. Even if the statements in the *Harivaṁśa* and Purāṇic texts are accepted as some proof that autochthonous Indian tribes worshipped nude goddesses, we cannot be certain that they worshipped the nude squatting goddess or that such a goddess was familiar to them from before the beginning of the Christian era.

As regards the survivals in modern Indian tribal art, an apparently nude female of the Baubo-type, carved in wood in low relief, is seen in two illustrations provided by Elwin from the arts of the Santals and the Marias,[97] and since the figures occur on a Santal marriage-litter and a Maria funerary pillar they may also be imagined to have religious connotations. But there is no record that the Santals or the Marias actually worship a goddess of that form. Presuming, however, for the sake of argument that such a goddess is known to these tribes, it still provides no evidence that she is original to them or that similar goddesses were worshipped in India by various non-brahmanical tribes before the beginning of the Christian era. The tentative suggestion of Sisodia, therefore, though not illegitimate, is scarcely more than a conjecture. Any worthwhile evidence of the origin of the nude squatting goddess in India must be obtained through an investigation of reliable historical antecedents.

The known historical antecedents suggest two alternative possibilities, *viz.*, that the nude goddess is a descendent of her remote chalcolithic ancestresses in India, or that she is a foreign or Greco-Roman goddess who was introduced into India in the early centuries of the Christian era. The solution, however, is somewhat complicated by the possibility that the two alternatives may not be as well defined and disparate as they appear, and connections between the two in remote times have also been suggested.[98]

Codrington was the first to suggest the possibility of borrowing of a Greek goddess into India. But it was Sankalia who most cogently argued the case in favour of such a possibility. He not only published several figures of the goddess, but also reconstructed their historical background, in which foreign inspiration appears highly probable. Both the scholars ignored the tentative connection imagined by Marshall between the Bhiṭā figure and the upside-down female on the oblong sealing from Harappa, and even though Sankalia has now modified his stand after the Inamgaon excavations, he does not rule out the possibility of a foreign inspiration around the beginning of the Christian era.

If like Codrington and Sankalia, we also do not question Murray's nomenclature, it must be accepted that the images of the Indian goddess, in the essential elements of their iconography, do conform to her "Baubo-type". Further, the majority of these images come from the early centuries of the Christian era. All the north Indian specimens—from Mathura, Bhīṭā and Kauśāmbī—are assignable to the Kuṣāṇa period and most of the specimens from the Deccan also range from the 1st to the 3rd century A.D. This was the period when India had the closest trade contacts with the Roman world in the west.[99] This fact was already known from the Greek sources likes the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, but recent archaeology has confirmed it, and it is even possible to speak of Roman trading posts in India in this period.[100] As pointed out by Sankalia,[101] it is clear that the contact was not only confined to the Kuṣāṇa empire in the North but was even more brisk through seaports on the coastal regions of India. Excavations at Arikamedu, Chandravalli, Kolhapur, Nevasa, Junnar and Ujjain have brought to light Roman coins as well as sherds of Roman amphorae. There is also an associated fine red-polished ware, as at Nasik and probably also at Nevasa and several other Andhra sites, which, if not actually of Roman origin, may have been made in imitation of the Roman ware. One of the terracotta figures from Ter (**Fig. 5**) was discovered in association with such sherds. With this accumulated information, Sankalia supported Codrington's suggestion, and, since Murray had looked essentially to Egypt for the origin and development of the Baubo-cult, he felt that the inspiration was received in India most probably from Egypt through the Romans in about 1st-2nd century A.D.[102]

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[96] Cf. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 492.

[97] Elwin, *The Tribal Art of Middle India, etc.*, figs. 83 and 102; see also Fraser (ed.), *The Many Faces of Primitive Art*, p. 46, fn.4. Sisodia's reference to the fig. nos. as 82 and 120 (see *EW.*, n.s., 19, no. 3-4, p.412, fn. 9) is apparently inaccurate.

[98] See below.

The circumstantial evidence would thus appear to be strongly in favour of a foreign inspiration of the Indian goddess, but it is interesting that Baubo herself is a very obscure figure in Greek mythology and it is uncertain how many of the so-called "Baubo-type" figures from the Roman-Egyptian world actually represent that goddess. Murray's paper itself hints at this obscurity, although it provides much useful information about the origin and nature of Baubo.

Baubo has attracted the attention of several scholars who interested themselves in the Orphic religion and Eleusinian Mysteries.[103] Perhaps the most important source of Baubo's myth is the Orphic version of the rape of Persephone and the wandering of the sorrowing Demeter in search of her daughter.[104] In this version, which is dateable to the

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[99] See *e.g.*, Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 228 ff..

[100] Wheeler, *AI*, 2, 1946, pp. 17 ff..

[101] *Art. As.*, XXIII, p. 113.

[102] *Art. As.*, XXIII, p. 121. Sankalia also rejects Kramrisch's identification, but agrees that this foreign goddess, once absorbed, may have been identified with Aditi Uttānapad.

[103] In spite of her obscurity, there is considerable literature on Baubo. A fairly comprehensive list of ancient sources, literary as well as archaeological, is collected by Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion, etc.*, pp. 136-7. For modern literature and opinions on Baubo, see Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*, vol. 2, p. 131, fn. 5, and also vol. 3, part 2, p. 1119; Nilsson, *Geschichte der griecheschen Religion*, I, p. 657, fn. 2. Particularly referred is Kern, "Baubo", in Pauly-Wissowa (ed.), *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1897), III, pp. 150-1. See also Guthrie, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-6; Kerenyi, *The Gods of the Greeks*, pp. 241 ff.; Mylonas, *Eleusis and Eleusinian Mysteries*, pp. 291 ff.. Some other important references are cited below at appropriate places.

[104] Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta*, 52, as cited in Guthrie, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-5; Kerenyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 242 ff., ,*etc.*; see also *Clement of Alexandria*, tr. Butterworth, po. 40 ff.

1st century B.C.,[105] the scene of the rape was Eleusis. Demeter, looking for her daughter, was received here by poor Dysaules and his wife Baubo in their humble cottage where their sons informed the goddess about the rape. The grief-stricken Demeter is said to have refused the barley-drink offered by her hostess, whereupon Baubo lifted up her gown and revealed her uncomely womb through which the child Iacchus was laughing. The goddess laughed too and accepted the drink.

In the above myth, Baubo appears in the role of a servant of Demeter, but there is no doubt about her having been a goddess in her own right. The only certain evidence of her cult, however, comes not from Eleusis but from the island of Paros where an inscription of the 1st century B.C. is dedicated to her along with Demeter, Kore, and Zeus Eubuleus by Erasippe, the daughter of Prason.[106]

Classical scholars have often suspected Baubo to be an alien figure on the Greek soil. She has been variously found alien to the Orphic religion,[107] to the Eleusinian Mysteries [108] and even to the island of Paros where the inscription referring to her cult was found.[109] There is, however, no unanimity about her place of origin. On the basis of an inscription from Galatea (north Phrygia, Asia Minor) which mentions Baubo, another inscription from Magnesia on Maeander which speaks of a Maenad of that name, and the fact that Asklepiades of Tragilos (4th century B.C.) represents Baubo and Dysaules as parents of Mise, who is known to be a figure of Anatolian cult as well as of Orphic tradition, Guthrie, following a suggestion of Gruppe, has looked to Anatolia, or more particularly Phrygia, as the original home of Baubo.[110]

At a very early stage of the study of Baubo, Egypt was considered the real source of the goddess. Thus Foucart, pointing out that Baubo is essentially alien to the Eleusinian Mysteries, looked to that country for her origin, especially as a large number of her figures were supposed to appear in Egypt in the Roman period.[111] Since Dieterich had very early demonstrated that the word *Baubo* originally meant "that which she showed to Demeter", *i.e.*, the female sex,[112] Mylonas has recently argued that the name seems to have been coined after the fact, and, therefore, it could only have been created in a locality "where the raising of clothes by women and the exhibition of their secret parts, accompanied by banter, obscene language and gestures, were related to the worship of some God or Goddess".[113] The only report of such a custom is by Herodotus, who relates it to the Egyptian delta. According to him, women pilgrims on boats en route to the shrine of the cat-headed goddess Pasht at Bubastis, on approaching a town on the river-bank, used to indulge in singing and dancing, and shouting mockery of the women of the town, and some would stand up and raise their garments to expose their secret parts.[114] Diodorus also preserves a tradition that when after the death of the sacred Apis-bull of Memphis, a new one was discovered, only women might look at the God for forty days, but they did this "while lifting their clothes up and showing their private parts to the God".[115]

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[105] Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

[106] Kern, in Pauly-Wissowa, *op. cit.*, III, p. 150; Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

[107] Guthrie, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-6.

[108] Cf. Mylonas, *op. cit.*, pp. 291 ff. . Foucart had earlier expressed a similar opinion, cited by Picard in *RHR*, 95, 1927, pp. 220 ff. (see below).

[109] Cf. Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

[110] Guthrie, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-6.

[111] As cited by Picard in *RHR*, 95, 1927, pp. 220 ff. (see below); cf. also Hornblower, G.D., "Predynastic Figures of Women and their Successors", *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, XV, 1929, pp. 46-7, and Murray, cited below.

[112] Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

Murray also suggested an Egyptian origin of Baubo.[116] She noted that in the ancient world, the most realistic of Baubo-type figurines belong to Egypt, though of the Roman period, and the Classical scholars themselves seem to accept an Egyptian origin of the goddess when they equate Baubo-Phryne (Frog-Baubo) with Heqt, the Egyptian Frog-goddess of birth. Even though, she argues, the equation Baubo-Hecate with Baubo-Heqt is philologically impossible, it might still be correct if understood to be based on some of the Baubo-figures. According to her, since in the Greek sources, the goddess is referred to both as Baubo and Babo, her name is probably derived from the goddess Bebt, the female counterpart of Beb. She points out that the cult of this pair is best known in the First Intermediate Period, particularly in the VIIth Dynasty, when personal names compounded with Beb are very frequent, and it seemed significant that Baubo figures should appear in great numbers in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, when deities of the common people became important.[117]

In a well-documented study, Isidore Lévy has also looked for the source of the myth of the goddess baring herself to ancient Egypt, from where, according to him, it spread in the Alexandrian times to the Greek archipelago, Asia Minor and as far east as Japan.[118] He believed that the Baubo-episodes of Orphic tradition were late Hellenistic imitations of old and obscene Egyptian myths, as in the legend of goddess Hathor who pulled up her clothes in front of her father. In this legend, which is preserved in a papyrus deteable to the reign of Ramesses V (c. 12th century B.C.) and is entitled "The Contendings of Horus and Seth", Rē'Harakhti, the Master of the Universe, who is aggrieved and pensive after being taunted in the tribunal, regains his composure and resumes seat after his daughter Hathor is said to have come to him and uncovered her nakedness before his face, which made him laugh.[119]

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[113] Mylonas, *op. cit.*, p. 293; cf. similar arguments by Lenormant and others as cited by Hornblower, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[114] Herodotus (tr. Godley, Loeb edn.), II. 59, 60, as cited by Mylonas, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

[115] As cited by Mylonas, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

[116] *JRAI*, LXIV, pp. 94-5.

[117] For objections by H.J. Rose to some of the suppositions of Murray, see *Man*, XXXIV, 1934, pp. 167-8.

[118] Lévy, "Autour d'un roman mythologique egyptien", in *Mélanges Franz Cumont*, vo. 2, pp. 817-45.

[119] See Gardiner, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty: Description of a Hieratic Papyrus with a Mythological Story, etc.*, pp. 1 and 13 ff., esp. 16.

Charles Picard has strongly criticized Foucart's thesis of an Egyptian origin of the motif, and Levy's, of its proliferation from Alexandrian Egypt. In several important contributions,[120] he has argued in favour of a very ancient motif of the Mother Goddess baring her secret parts popular all over the Mediterranean world and up to the Indus Valley.[121] In the Eleusinian episode of Baubo, he notices a continuity of ideas stretching back to the Cretan Mother Goddess, and still further, to the representation on the Harappa seal, and felt that the later Myceanean, Egyptian and Hellenistic representations express the same ancient conception. According to him, what was later interpreted as an obscene gesture by the Christian Fathers and became the basis of lurid jokes in Greek writing was an essential element of the ancient Mother Goddess cult, and the exhibition of secret parts was a ritual act related to the fertility of animals and the earth. He commends Lagrange for emphasizing that, though it is attributed to a servant, the Baubo myth was essentially a prerogative of the Great Goddess, and points out that it is not without significance that St. Gregory Nazianzen, in a sermon against heathens, attributes Baubo's act to the goddess Demeter herself.

The earliest evidence of Picard from the Mediterranean world comes from a crudely-sketched figure on a pot-sherd from Mallia in Crete.[122] It is not very clear in the illustration provided. The main figurepro bably does show a female with the sexual triangle clearly marked, and it might represent the Mother Goddess in her fertility aspect, but Picard imagines her as portrayed with legs widespread and finds her cognate with the earlier Harappa representation of the nude upside-down female with a plant issuing from her womb, already noticed by Marshall.[123] He also notes several examples, in literature and art, from the Myceanean, Etruscan, Greek and Roman culture, as later expressions of the same motif of ritual exhibitionism in various forms.[124]

Baubo herself, according to Picard, is only one of the several manifestations of this ancient motif, and apparently a very minor one.[125] In fact, he believed that Baubo and her male counterpart Baubon, together, are "gastro-cephalic" spirits who were essentially personifications of female and male sex-organs and modelled on the pattern of the earlier pair, Iambe and Iambos.[126] The only certain representations of Baubo,

[120] Picard, "L'Episode de Baubô dans les Mystères d'Eleusis", *RHR*, 95, 1927, pp. 220-55; "D'un Sceau d'Harappa a l'Anneau d'Or de Tirynthe", *RA*, July-Dec. 1938, pp. 5-16; "Die Grosse Mutter von Kreta bis Eleusis", *EJ*, 1938, pp. 91 ff. .

[121] See esp. *EJ*, 1938, pp. 100 ff.

[122] *Ibid.*, pl. 4 of Picard, fac. p. 102; see also the line-drawings in figs. 7 and 8 in *RA*, July-Dec. 1938, pp. 12-3.

[123] Picard in *RA*, July-Dec. 1938, pp. 5 ff., and *EJ*, 1938, p. 101. For the Harappa seal, see p. 183. The tiger or tiger-headed monsters on one side of the Harappa seal, according to Picard, could be demons with protective armour or priest-dancers clothed like animals. The scene on the reverse showing a woman with upraised hands threatened by a man holding a sickle reminds him of the Greek myth of Perseus killing Gorgon. From the blood of the latter came out Pegasus and Chrysaor, and not just a twig with leaves; see *EJ*, 1938, p. 101.

[124] *EJ*, 1938, pp. 102 ff. .

[125] *EJ*, 1938, p. 101, fn. 3, and pp.102 ff. .

[126] *Ibid.*, p. 101, fn. 3, and *RHR*, 95, 1927, pp. 226 ff. .

according to him, are the "bizarre and scandalous" figures from Prienne, without torso, showing on the belly, over the clearly indicated sex, a human face full of details, apparently Iacchus.[127] These figures are generally dated to the 4th century A.D. .

Picard might be accused of occasionally stretching his point in bringing diverse elements of myth and art within the compass of a single abstract idea of great antiquity. He also appears to underrate Baubo, whose strange service to Demeter seems to have been a popular myth of the Greco-Roman world, and whose cult is indubitably established in the 1st century B.C. on the island of Paros. Again, his ideas about the origin of Baubo carry no greater conviction than the alternative suggestions that derive the goddess from elements of myths and practices in the Near East or Egypt. The real merit of Picard's investigations seems to lie in suggesting the possibility of a great antiquity of the motif of the goddess baring herself and, what is even more important for our purpose, the possibility of a continued history of it in various forms in the Mediterranean world up to the Greco-Roman times. Fraser refers to early Neolithic examples, probably of the 7th millennium B.C., excavated at Chatal Hüyük in Anatolia and showing the lower half of "goddesses in birth giving position."[128] Certain bronze pins from Luristan, on the western border of Iran and the fringes of ancient Near East, also show the motif.[129] In one example, the nude female with the outstretched legs and holding her breasts with her two hands is actually portrayed as giving birth to a child. In another, she is surrounded by rosettes all around, which remind us of the Indian figures associated with the lotus. These pins are generally dated between 1000 and 600 B.C. .

It must be accepted that the form of the nude goddess and the essential message conveyed by it lack any sophistication, and have all the appearance of a primitive idea

[127] *EJ*, 1938, p. 101, fn. 3, and *RHR*, 95, 1927, pp. 248-9. For the Prienne figures, see Neumann, Erich, *The Great Mother*, pl. 48.

[128] Fraser, in Fraser (ed.), *The Many Faces of Primitive Art*, p. 37, citing Mellaart, James, "Earliest of Neolithic Cities: The Third Season of Excavations at Anatolian Chatal Hüyük, *etc.*," *Illustrated London News*, Feb, 1, 1964, pp. 158-60; see also Mellaart, *Catal Hüyük: A Neolithic Town in Anatolia*, pp. 180 ff., esp. 183. For the dating of the site, see *ibid.*, pp. 52-3. The only clay statuette supposed to represent the goddess, seated on a throne, in the birth-giving position (see *ibid.*, als. 67, 68, IX and fig. 52) is dateable to the 6th millenium B.C. . Cf. the claims made about the representations of mother-goddess figures in the attitude of giving birth in the terracotta pieces of a slightly later period (approximately 4000 B.C.) from Tall Arpachiyah in ancient Mesopotamia, and of a still later period (approximately the middle of the 2nd millenium B.C.) from Tell Beit Mirsim in Palestine; see, for the evidence from Tall Arpachiyah, Mallowan, M.E.L., and Rose, J. Cruikshank, "Excavations at Tall Arpachiyah, 1933", *Iraq*, II, 1935, p. 79 ff.; (cf. also Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, p. 65); and for Tell Beit Mirsim, see Mallowan and Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 79, fn. 4. and James, *Prehistoric Religion*, p. 154, both citing, Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*. The claims about the latter evidence appear to us to be quite doubtful if the figures under reference are the same as those illustrated in Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, p. 107.

[129] See Ghirshman, *Iran*, p. 102 and pl. 8a; Goddard, *The Art of Iran*, p. 69 and figs. 61-2; see also Fraser, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-8 and fig. 1.

expressed crudely. Guthrie expressed this sentiment when he noted about Baubo that "she has all the characteristics of a creature of primitive popular imagination, a kind of bogey, and in later times became quite naturally an associate of the dread Hekate".[130] Kramrisch seems to have been conscious of this when she read "a deeper message and a more primal vision" in the Alampur figure,[131] and, perhaps for the same reason, Przyluski commends Picard against Lèvy.[132] It is this which gives added significance to the representations of the Harappa seal.

In spite of the obscurity that still surrounds the origins of the Indus Valley culture, its contact with the contemporary Western world is generally accepted. It is imagined that this contact embraced various aspects of social and material life, not the least of which is the probability that similar cults of the Great Mother spread from the shores of the Mediterranean to the basin of the Indus river.[133] At the same time, the discovery of the Indus Culture has been hailed as revolutionary for the history of Indian religions, and various aspects of later Hinduism, particularly the prominent cults of the Mother Goddess, which are not directly traceable to the Vedic religion, are often conveniently traced back to the Indus Culture.[134] Now, whether or not Picard was right in associating the representation on the Harappa tablet with the drawing on the pot-sherd from Mallia, it is interesting to observe that while a continuity of the motif of the Goddess baring herself is demonstrable, however loosely, in the ancient Mediterranean world from the early Neolithic to the Hellenistic-Roman times, there is no such thing on the Indian soil. Except for the so-called "Aditi Uttānapad" in *Ṛg-veda* and the "headless" Nirṛti in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, both of whom, as we have seen, seem to have little claim to identification with the nude squatting goddess in terracotta and stone, the enigmatic prediction of Nārada in the *Matsya Purāṇa* is the only possible allusion to her in literature. In archaeology, in the large number of terracottas assignable to the Maurya-Śuṅga period, if not earlier, not a single true representation of this goddess has been noticed, even though a high percentage of such figures are of females and are frequently labelled as representations of the Mother-Goddess.[135] The balance of probability, therefore, seems to favour a foreign inspiration of the Indian goddess.

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130. Guthrie, op. cit., p. 135.
131. See above, pp. 186.
132. Przyluski, *La Grande Déesse*, p. 156.
133. See, *e.g.*, Marshall (ed.), *MIC*, I, pp. 50, 57-8; Coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, p. 3; Przyluski, "The Great Goddess in India and Iran", *IHQ*, X, pp. 405-38, *etc.* . C.L. Fabri has specifically tried to relate the Mother-goddess cults in Crete and the Indus Valley (see his "Cretan Bull-grappling Sports and the Bull-sacrifice in the Indus Valley", *ASI-AR*, 1934, pp. 93-101), although some of his assumptions and the conclusion have been objected to by K.N. Sastri in "An Important Cultural Link between Indus Civilization and the Minoan Crete", *JAS-L*, XXII, 1956, pp. 39 ff. .
134. Marshall (ed.), *MIC.*, I, pp. 48-9, 77-8; cf. also Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, p. 205; Majumdar, R.C., "Evolution of Religio-philosophical Culture in India", in Bhattacharya (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, pp. 31-3; Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, pp. 251 ff., *etc.*; see also above, Ch. II.
135. Cf. *e.g.*, Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas", *Mārg*, VI, no. 2, pp. 22 ff.; see also above, Ch. I, pp. 48 ff. . Most of these so-called figures of the goddess represent standing females, and many (Contd.)

There is no doubt that the hypothesis of a foreign inspiration for the Indian figures has its own limitations. It may be pointed out that sexual symbols have an almost universal distribution in ancient cultures,[136] and similar symbols may have been conceived and developed independently in widely separated areas. What is more important, the specific symbol of the nude seated goddess with outstretched legs is itself very widely distributed in time and space. The Sheila-na-gigs on the mediaeval churches in England and Ireland,[137] certain mythical motifs in mediaeval Japanese literature[138] and a very large number of modern art examples from South-east Asia and the Pacific world in general,[139] have been taken to belong to the same class. On the other hand, it may be also suggested that there is such a strong current of erotic and sexual symbolism running through the history of Indian art, religion and culture that any hypothesis of a foreign inspiration in their context is hazardous.[140]

are nude; see *e.g.*, the Śuṅga terracotta illustrated as fig. 43 by Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*; cf. also the earlier gold-leaf plaque from Lauria-Nandangarh, *ibid.*, fig. 36. We do not believe, however, that the standig nude females in these terracottas, even when the sex is clearly marked, have any close relationship with the figures of the nude squatting goddess. As already suggested, the nudity of the squatting goddes is of too specialized a kind to be imagined as directly derived from the former. For the same reason, we believe that even though the Classical Baubo may have a very ancient origin, Murray is not quite justified in directly relating to it all those earlier standing female figures in Egypt where the sexual triangle is very prominently marked; see *JRAI*, LXIV, p. 96.

136. Cf. Hartland, "Phallism", *ERE*, 9, pp. 830-1; see also Chakravarti, *The Tantras* : *Studies on their Religion and Literature*, pp. 8-9.

137. See *JRAI*, LXIV, pp. 97 ff.; *Man*, XXIII, 1923, pp. 140-1; *ibid.*, XXIX, 1929, pp. 133-5; *ibid.*, XXX, 1930, pp. 10-1; *ibid.*, XXXI, 1931, pp. 3-6, *etc.*; also *ERE*, 9, pp. 817-8; Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain*, pp. 229, 232; Fraser (ed.), *The Many Faces of Primitive Art*, pp. 44-5, where reference is also made to Guest, "Irish Sheela-na-gigs in 1935", *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries, Ireland*, LXVI, 1936, pp. 107-29, and Mercier, *The Irish Comic Tradition*, p. 54. The obvious fertility aspect and possible apotropaic significance of these figures are often noted, but their precise meaning remains obscure; see, however, Murray's opinion cited below. The meaning of the word *Sheila-na-gig* is also doubtful; see *Man*, XXXIV, 1934, p. 184; *ibid.*, XXXV, 1935, pp. 62-3.

138. See Lévy, op. cit., *Mélanges Franz Cumont*, vol. 2, pp. 821 ff.; Przyluski, *La Grande Déesse*, p. 156; also *Kojiki*, tr. Philippi, p. 84 and fn. 19.

139. Several such examples are collected by Sankalia (see *Art. As.*, XXIII, pp. 121-2), but a much fuller and up-to-date account is given by Fraser; see Fraser (ed.), *The Many Faces of Primitive Art*, pp. 47 ff. . Fraser, however, concentrates on a special type of these figures which he calls "the Heraldic Woman"; see below.

140. It is very common to cite India for the wide prevalence of sexual and erotic symbols; cf. *e.g.*, the introductory remark in Fiśer, *Indian Erotics of the Earliest Period*, p. 5; also *ERE*, 9, pp. 442, 818, 819; *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, 6, p. 192; *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, 14, p. 206; Briffault, Robert, "Sex in Religion", in Culverton and Schmal hausen (ed.), *Sex in Civilization*, pp. 31-52. A good example of this aspect of Indian culture may be said to be the popular worship of the *Śiva-liṅga* which, in its standard iconography, combines both the male and female sex principles. But more appropriate examples, equally well known though not fully investigated, are the Tantric traditions in Indian religions, the erotic sculptures on the mediaeval temples and the scientific erotic literature of India. For the attitude of ancient Indians towards the sexual life in general, see Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 170-2; and for the frequent erotic suggestions in the early Indian art, see coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, pp. 64-5.

The two limitations outlined above are valid and well worth keeping in mind. But they are also of a very general nature. It needs to be emphasized that in the case of the nude squatting goddess in India, we are not dealing with a general sexual symbol but with a very specific iconographic form. In fact, it is the highly standardized iconography of the goddess that not only provides definite evidence of a well distributed cult but also necessitates enquiry about origins from a specific source. Apparently, under some such compulsion, Murray related the Sheila-na-gigs to her Baubo-type[141] and Lévy imagined the proliferation of an old Egyptian mythical motif in the Greek legend of Baubo and the Japanese one of the goddess Ame-no-uzume,[142] even when adequate historical links were not available. In his very well-documented study of a special form of this motif, especially of its manifestations in the modern primitive cultures, Fraser faced the same situation and boldly postulated a common origin of the motif probably in the early neolithic times in the ancient Near East and its wide diffusion from that source.[143]

The original sources of the Sheila-na-gigs in the British Isles, the Japanese myth of the goddess Ame-no-uzume and the modern representations of the nude squatting goddess in the South-east Asia and the Pacific world in general are not our main concern here. We should, however, like to comment that, while in their own ways, Picard and Fraser have ably put their case suggesting the great antiquity of the motif of the goddess baring herself and its possible origins in the ancient Mediterranean world or the Near East, their arguments are of no help in understanding the historical process of its diffusion in later times in widely separated areas. Fraser's investigations, otherwise quite thorough and well argued, suffer in our opinion also from the two limitations he has imposed upon himself. Firstly, it is a very special type of the motif of the nude goddess that is principally investigated by Fraser. He calls it the "Heraldic Woman" and defines it as the image of a female figure holding the knees apart and exposing the genital area and symmetrically flanked on the two sides by two other figures who may be human beings, animals, monsters or birds.[144] He, therefore, does not regard the Indian specimens published by Codrington and Sankalia as true heraldic women,[145] although they could be regarded as connected with the same original motif. Secondly, what is even more important, he shows no awareness of the existence of possible literary motifs parallel to the artistic forms, and only discusses the problem of diffusion and various manifestations of the so-called "Heraldic Woman" in primitive art. Naturally, therefore, he makes no reference to the investigations of Picard and Lévy.

The non-awareness of the possibility of the literary forms of the motif, in our opinion, considerably detracts from the value of Fraser's conclusions, and betrays a refusal to face the complexity of historical problems that might be involved with the individual manifestations of the motif. To take the Indian phenomenon as an illustration, apart from the considerations that certain peculiarities of iconography of the Indian figures, *e.g.*, the headless form of several specimens, put them in a new light and necessitate independent explanations, and that a figure of as high artistic and technical merit as the one from Alampur presupposes the influence of learned traditions, the facts that at least one Indian figure bears a dedicatory inscription by a queen and the nude goddess appears to be referred to in the *Matsya Purāṇa* indicate that, howsoever primitive the idea underlying the nude squatting goddess may be, her figures in the historical period in India cannot be explained simply as manifestations of primitive art. All the Indian evidence considered together indicates a complex historical phenomenon of a cult of the nude goddess which had come into prominence in the early centuries of the Christian era, spread over a fairly extensive geographical area and become popular to an extent that it affected the higher religious traditions and was gradually being absorbed by them. Naturally such a phenomenon cannot be adequately explained on the basis of general assumptions, of the type made by Fraser, that the motif probably originated in the Near East in neolithic times and gradually diffused in the other regions of the world. Whether or not Lévy was right in ascribing an Egyptian origin to the motif of the goddess baring herself and imagining the Hellenistic Baubo as an imitation of the same, his idea of its proliferation to distant regions in relatively recent times would appear to suit at least the Indian phenomenon, even though he himself was unaware of it.

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[141] See above, p. 183, fn. 6.

[142] Lévy, *op. cit.*, *Mélanges Franz Cumont*, vol. 2, pp. 819 ff., esp. pp. 828 ff.; cf. also *Kojiki*, tr. Philippi, p. 84, fn. 19.

[143] Fraser, "The Heraldic Woman: A Study in Diffusion", in Fraser (ed.), *The Many Faces of Primitive Art, etc.*, pp. 36-99.

[144] *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

[145] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Sankalia was more appreciative in his original paper of the historical problems involved, naturally because in that he published a number of figures of the nude goddess of early historical times. His revised opinion, however, is open to the same objections as would be levelled against other diffusionist views.[146] As we have seen, Sankalia stretches back the history of the nude goddess still further to the Upper Paleolithic "Venuses".[147] Now, while in their apparently deliberate "facelessness" as well as marked emphasis on fertility, these Paleolithic figurines may be said to anticipate in a general way the basic ideas underlying our goddess, it would be impossible to establish connections between the two in the absence of historical links, just as it would be in the case of Neolithic Near East, ancient Mediterranean world, or even chalcolithic India. In trying to trace a hoary antiquity of the Indian figures, there is also the risk of overlooking their essential form and iconography, and of adopting too general a criteria. This becomes very clear when we see that in his attempt to identify genuine prototypes in India, Sankalia makes a sharp distinction between Harappa and other Chalocolithic cultures

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146. It must be noted that Sankalia's reference to the nude squatting goddess of historical times in his paper on the Inamgaon mother-goddess is very brief and cursory, and rather incidental.

147. For Upper Paleolithic "Venus" figurines, Sankalia refers to Absolan, K., "The Deluvial Anthropomorphic Statuettes and Drawings, especially the so-called Venus Statuettes discovered in Moravia", *Art. As.*, XII, 1949, pp. 201-220. Brief comments on their meaning and significance may also be seen in James, E.O., "Prehistoric Religion", in Parrinder (ed.) *Man and his Gods*, pp. 23 ff., esp. 27c-28a, and in the article "Faceless Goddesses", in *Man, Myth and Magic* (An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of the Supernatural), Fasc. 32, p. 896.

and finds elements of the latter more significant than those of the former. He notes that figurines with featureless heads or without heads are absent in the Indus Civilization, whereas they are a regular feature of other Chalcolithic cultures and are especially typical of Maharashtra. At the same time, he chooses to ignore the evidence of the upside-down female on the oblong sealing from Harappa, which had appeared significant to Marshall and even to Picard and whose religious significance has always been suspected.[148]

If nudity and squatting posture are regarded as essential to the goddess' iconography and the idea of birth-giving Mother central to her concept, then the solution to the problem of her historical origin and inspiration is facilitated to a certain extent by the fact that close parallels of the motif come, besides India, only from the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean world. The only possible source of this motif in the Indian sub-continent could be the solitary representation on the Harappa seal, but it appears to us that the similarities between the two do not extend far enough to suggest the derivation of one from the other. In any case, complete absence of connecting links poses serious historical problem, and the sudden appearance of the figures of the nude goddess in the early centuries of the Christian era, and contemporary or near contemporary inscriptional and literary evidence suggesting her popular cult, remain inexplicable. The phenomenon strongly suggests a fresh inspiration and, therefore, the need to look outside India for its adequate explanation.[149] The historical background of the Indian figures also favours a fresh inspiration from the Roman West. As Sankalia had demonstrated in his earlier writing, the specimens of the nude squatting goddess in appreciable number appear for the first time in a period when India had the closest contacts with the Roman World, and some of these were actually discovered in association with a ware which, if not itself of Roman origin, was made in imitation of it.

As the most conspicuous representative of the goddess baring her secret parts, the Classical Baubo could well be the inspiration behind the Indian figures, but, from what we have seen of the obscurity surrounding her name, it would be impossible to assert it with any confidence. In any case, whatever may be the origin and early history of the Goddess baring herself in the Near Eastern or the Mediterranean world, and whatever different forms it may have taken in later times, it seems to us safe to assume that it was a popular religious motif during the Roman period when a large number of figures of "Baubo-type" are said to appear in Egypt, and it could have been introduced into India by the Romans in the early centuries of the Christian era.

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[148] Apart from the difficulty of establishing historical connections, we are still in the very speculative stages of the interpretation of prehistoric religions. Some caution is noticeable in E.O. James' article referred to above, but see also the review of his *Prehistoric Religion* by J. Gwyn Griffiths, in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 44, 1958, pp. 124 ff. Reference has already been made above (in Ch. II) to the caution sounded by Wheeler in the interpretation of Indus Valley statuettes (*Indus Civilization*, p. 91) and by Ucko in that of the Neolithic Cretan figurines (*JRAI*,92, pts.I-II, 1962, pp. 38 ff.). Similarly, Andrew Fleming has cautioned against frequent interpretations of European megalithic tombs in the light of mother-goddess cults ("The Myth of the Mother Goddess", *World Archaeology*, I, no. 2, Oct. 1969, pp. 247-61). Serious difficulties in religious interpretation of prehistoric antiquities is also underlined in Mircea Eliade's review of Alexander Marshak's *The Roots of Civilization, etc.*, and Jacques Couvin's *Religions néolithiques de Syro-Palestine, etc.*, ("On Prehistoric Religions", *HR*, 14, no. 2, Nov. 1974, pp. 140 ff.)

[149] On the grounds that the image was apparently unknown prior to c. 1st or 2nd century A. D., Fraser also thinks that the idea does not appear to be indigenous to India; see Fraser, *op. cit.*, in Fraser (ed.), *The Many Faces of Primitive Art*, p. 46. It is interesting to note that he too makes no reference to the representation on the Harappa sealing.

Murray has noted a few details about the "Baubo-type" figures of Roman Egypt which seem to be significant also in the context of their Indian counterparts. She informs us that these figures, where adequate records exist, were discovered in houses, usually in the inner, *i.e.*, the women's apartments, indicating that these were for the use of women.[150] Again, while citing the Sheila-na-gigs of the British Isles as later examples of the ancient "Baubo-type", the same author informs us that Romsey Abbey, which contains one such figure, was a nunnery and one of the most important religious houses of the Norman period in the south of England, and since, in the Middle Ages, young girls of good position were brought up in these institutions and at puberty left them to be married, the Sheila-na-gigs on the wall might suggest that the bride may have been prepared for marriage in the convent.[151] She also quotes a modern incident to the effect that when one such figure was removed from the tower of St. Michael's Church at Oxford, a local newspaper published the information that brides on their way to the Church for their weddings were made to look at the figure.[152] She thus concludes that Baubo seems to have been a goddess for women only, like Bona Dea, from whose rites men were excluded.[153] Although the Indian evidence is even more slight in this respect, it is significant that in the case of the only figure with a dedicatory inscription, viz. the marble image from Nagarjunikonda, a queen appears as the worshipper of the goddess.[154] Chapgar's report about the Siddan Kotte figure also indicates that the nude goddess was essentially a goddess of women.[155] This parallelism incidentally suggests another argument in favour of a possible foreign inspiration of the Indian goddess. According to the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, pretty girls were sent as articles of merchandise from Alexandria to India.[156] Weber had used this argument to suggest possible Hellenistic influence in the concept of the Indian god of love, Kāma, whose *makara-dhvaja* brings him so close to the dolphin-bannered Eros.[157] We feel that the evidence of the *Periplus* is even more apt in the context of the introduction of the nude squatting goddess in India. It is easy to imagine that the girls imported into India from Alexandria brought with them their favourite deities.

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[150] *JRAI*, LXIV, p. 97.

[151] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

[152] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[153] *Ibid.* For a brief notice of the cult of Bona Dea, see Kiefer, *Sexual Life in Ancient Rome*, pp. 143-5.

[154] See above, pp. 190-1.

[155] See above, p. 189.

[156] *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, tr. Schoff, para 49, p. 42.

[157] Weber, "On the History of Religion in India - A Brief Review" (translated into English from the author's original German), *IA*, July 1901, p. 283.

There is absolutely no question about the local origin of the figures of the goddess found in India. This is clearly reflected in the technique, art-style and ornaments. Even when her inspiration appears to have been introduced from the Roman west, the nude goddess seems to have very soon acquired a characteristic Indian form. It must first be noted that all the figures of the Indian goddess belong to Murray's "Baubo-Phryne" type.[158] There is no specimen from India in which the legs are horizontal, the knees bent and the feet turned inward, a posture which according to Murray is the most usual in the Roman figures. Similarly, the hands in India, where they can be clearly seen, are always raised upwards. They are never held forward as in invitation, and there is absolutely no indication, explicit or in the form of arms-akimbo, that they are laid on the inner thighs to stretch the legs apart and emphasize the pudenda.[159]

It is difficult to say what was the real meaning of the upraised hands in the eyes of the worshippers of the goddess, especially when they hold no attributes. They certainly cannot be understood as in an attitude of supplication or prayer, for that would be incongruous in the context of a cult-goddess, although, outside such a context the upraised hands would normally indicate supplication.[160] Murray's use of the expression for Baubo-type figures[161] thus could only be regarded as valid for a description of the visual form of the figures. If the figures from Egypt *etc.*, of the Roman period were unmistakably identified as Baubo, perhaps the myth of her peculiar service to Demeter could provide some explanation of the raised hands. Considering, however, the possibility that the myth of Baubo and Baubo herself, as well as other cognate concepts of the Greco-Roman world, were developments of an ancient motif of the Mother-Goddess baring herself, we feel that the best explanation of the upraised hands and the entire attitude of the figures would be to understand them as the depiction of the birth-giving Mother-Goddess.[162] In the context of the Indian figures at least, this is likely to be the central idea.

The absence of the head and face in the majority of the Indian figures is paralleled to a certain extent by the terracotta figures of Baubo from Prienne, which are without torso and for whom, owing to the depiction of a human face on the belly, Picard uses

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158. *JRAI*, LXIV, p. 95.
159. Cf. *ibid.* The only figures in which the knees are bent, the feet turned inward and the hands placed on the inner thighs to stretch the legs apart and emphasize the pudenda are the late mediaeval ones of the type illustrated by Maury. But these, as already noted (see above, p. 191, fn. 46), do not appear to us to be representations of the nude squatting goddess.
160. In the Semitic tradition, and possibly in the western religious tradition in general, the attitude of the upraised hands, as in the Baubo-Phryne type of figures, is one of the well known attitudes of prayer or supplication, or expression of humility before the deity. In Vedic India, as we have already seen, hands were raised in salutation to gods and for making offerings to them. But the typical Indian form of prayer and supplication, as seen in early Indian relief carvings and modern usage, is the raising of the two hands folded together, the open palms pressing each other, and holding them close to the chest.
161. *JRAI*, XLIV, p. 95.
162. Cf. Kramrisch, cited above, pp. 184 ff. .

the word "gastro-cephalic".[163] But the Indian figures form a class by themselves and are thoroughly imbued with Indianness. The most effective device used to obliterate the head and face is by substituting a fully-blossomed lotus in their place. The best and artistically the most satisfying example of this is, of course, the Alampur figure of the 8th century A.D. (**Fig. 4**), but it is already seen in the Bhīṭā terracotta of the Kuṣāṇa period (**Fig. 1**) and also in the figure from Mahurjhari (**Fig. 12**) and the two new acquisitions to the Central Museum, Nagpur (**Figs. 13, 14**). The alternative device, as far as can be guessed from the poorly preserved specimens, seems to be the complete omission of of the head and neck and the rounding off of the torso to give it the appearance of an elongated *stūpa* or *liṅgam* (**Figs. 6-9, 11**). Perhaps the necessary requirement was the concealing of the face, and no Buddhist or Śivaite meaning need to be read in such forms. But it must be admitted, with Kramrisch, that the introduction of the lotus does appear to infuse the figures with a new meaning and significance.[164]

It is difficult to be certain of the reason for the absence of the head and face of the goddess. Despite the Prienne figures, there is nothing in the Orphic myth of Baubo or in the earlier history of the goddess,[165] whether derived from the motif of an ancient Mediterranean goddess baring herself or from Hathor, Bebt or other similar concepts from Egypt, to suggest this requirement. It is possible that, at least in India, the hesitation to portray the face is to be understood partially in the light of the blatant immodesty of the figures, and Sankalia, therefore, may be right in suggesting that the modern name *Lajjā Gaurī* of the Siddan Kotte goddess, as reported by Chapgar, is really a euphemism and simply means a "shameless woman."[166]

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163. See above, p. 207.
164. In her note of Aug. 10-11, 1972, already referred to, Miss Kramrisch added further comments on the lotus head, which are reproduced here with suitable changes : "Just as the anthropomorphic bodies of Varāha or Narasiṁha carry the head of boar or lion, so does the body of a woman carry a lotus. The lotus is her head and face. "Head and face" have the shape of a lotus. Conceptually and visually the lotus head is part of the total image of the goddess, whatever be her name. The terracotta from Ter excavation (**Fig. 6**) and headless terracotta in relief from Nagarjunikonda (**Fig. 7**) place the huge "lotus" right above the navel or above squatting part with the legs drawn up. The latter would seem to show a round shape which is so conventionalized that its identification is difficult. What is omitted here is the upper part of the female body from the hips to the neck. This omission intensifies the conjoint effect and meaning of the image of the lotus-headed goddess. In the other terracotta figure from Ter, which was a surface find (**Fig. 5**), the lower circle of the petals of the lotus is visible in the reproduction, whereas the stone relief from Nevasa excavation (**Fig. 8**) and the tiny stone sculpture from Vadgaon (**Fig. 9**) appear to be incomplete images."

    It is in continuation of the above that Miss Kramrisch added: "The nude squatting goddess, in her particular shape in Indian art, has a lotus for her head. As such she is an Indian creation though also a member of a widespread type. Lacking the evidence of an inscription, we can not possibly know her name. In linking her up with Aditi-Uttānapad I meant to place her into the Indian ambience, but I did not mean to give her this name iconographically."
165. Picard understands the headless Prienne figures in the context of the class of headless spirits; see *RHR*, 95, 1927, p. 249 ff. .
166. *Art. As.*, XXIII, p. 121.

In the present state of our knowledge, the history of the nude goddess in India seems to have been confined roughly to the first eight centuries of the Christian era. But Codrington has noted that her type survives in certain late forms of Kāli and Cāmuṇḍā, which are largely identical figures in myth if not in iconography.[167] A form of Caṇḍikā, which is characterized as Rudra-Carcikā or Rudra-Cāmuṇḍā, is also described in the *Agni-Purāṇa* as *ūrdhva-pādā*, but it may not mean the characteristic pose of the nude squatting goddess since the immediately following verse seems to understand it as a dancing posture.[168] It is interesting to note, however, that Cāmuṇḍā is a late entrant into the circle of brahmanical goddesses.[169] She is unknown to the epics and seems to be referred to for the first time in the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti[170] and the *Devī-Māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.[171]

There is a greater possibility that the form of the nude goddess survives in the mediaeval figure called Chinnamastā. Chinnamastā was one of the ten Mahāvidyās of the Tantric Hinduism who were especially venerated by the Śāktas of Bengal.[172] The iconographic form of this goddess resembles a form of the Buddhist Tantric deity Vajrayoginī and Bhattacharya believed that she was originally Buddhist and later borrowed in the Hindu pantheon.[173] As conceived by the Hindu and Buddhist Tantrics,[174] Chinnamastā, or the headless Vajrayoginī, is a fierce goddess carrying in the right hand the weapon with which she has decapitated herself and in the left her own severed head with its gaping mouth and sticking-out tongue. She is nude, with dishevelled hair, and wears a garland of human heads around her neck. On the two sides, she is attended by two female figures who are also nude and who are said to drink the blood gushing out of the severed neck of the goddess. These attendants are called Dākinī and Varṇinī in Hindu Tantrism, and Vajravairocanī and Vajravarṇanī in Buddhist. It will be seen that the nudity and the severed head of the Tantric goddess have clear parallelisms with the "headless" form of the nude squatting goddess, but the former has very different positions of hands and legs. Her left hand carrying her own head is raised up while the right is placed below. Moreover she does not have a squatting posture but assumes a form which should be best described as *vīrāsana*, with the right leg stretched forward and the left bent. In this form she is said to stand on Rati and Kāma who are in an attitude of sexual embrace.

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[167] Codrington, op. cit., *Man*, XXXV, 1935, p. 66; cf. a bronze figure of Kālī belonging to the Cola period illustrated in Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pl. LXX. Codrington also relates the squatting posture to the caryatid-friezes of dwarfs (Kīcakas, Gaṇas) as at Bharhut, and later at Badami and Ellora, but we feel this parallelism is of no special significance for the basic iconographic form of the goddess.

[168] *Ag. P.*, 50. 30-2 (Ass. ed., p. 74) :
Śikhipiccham̐ dhanuḥ kheṭam̐ patākā bhayakukkuṭe,
Kapālakartarīśūlapāśabhṛdyāmyasaumyayoḥ. 30
Gaja-carma-bhṛdūrdhvāsyapāda syādrudracarcikā,
Saiva cāṣṭabhujā devī śiroḍamarukānvitā. 31
Tena sā rudra-cāmuṇḍā nādeśvaryatha nṛtyatī,
Iyameva mahālakṣmīrupaviṣṭā caturmukhī. 32
V. 31a is not found in some mss. of the *Purāṇa*; see *ibid.*, p. 74. Cf. also *Ag. P.*, tr. Dutt, vol. I, p. 185; Bhattasali, *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, p. 209; Mallmann, *Les Enseignements Iconographiques de l'Agni-Purāṇa*, p. 154.

[169] Cf. Hopkins, *EM*, p. 226; *Mār. P.*, tr. Pargiter, Introduction, p.xi.

[170] The Act V of *Mālatīmādhava* introduces this goddess and her temple in the city of Padmāvatī and refers to the attempt by her votaries to offer a human sacrifice there.

[171] *Mār. P.*, 84. 25-6; *ibid.*, tr. Pargiter, 87. 24-5, p. 500; see also above, Ch. III. If Sisodia's identification of the brass image from Rajasthan as a Digambara Jain icon, representing Mahāvīra's mother Triśalā, is correct, as also his suggestion that it may have been intended to be put on a swing (see *EW*, n. s., 19, nos. 3-4, p. 410; also above pp. 202-3), both the nudity and the position of hands and legs become intelligible without reference to the figures of the nude goddess.

[172] See Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 560, fn. 1.

[173] Bhattacharya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, pp. 1, 247.

[174] For the following description of the form of the goddess Chinnamastā-Vajrayoginī, see *ibid.*, pp. 247-8; Chakravarti, *Tantras : Studies on their Religion and Literature*, p. 88; and Bose and Haldar, *Tantras : Their Philosophy and Occult Secrets*, pp. 206-7.

The goddess Chinnamastā-Vajrayoginī has evidently a complex iconographic form made up of diverse elements, but, since she is the only well known example of a nude goddess without the head, a continuity of ideas with the nude squatting goddess is easily suggested. In fact, it is not improbable that she stands in a relatively direct line of continuity with the nude goddess of our investigation, who, with the passage of time and in the process of absorption, took on a characteristically Tantric form. While her nudity and headless form were retained, both the elements were interpreted in the light of the presumed fierce nature of the goddess. She was thus conceived of as decapitating herself, and riding the sexual pair, Kāma and Rati, in a sprinting posture.

Since the evidence of the cult of the nude goddess is mainly confined to figures in terracotta and stone, and since our knowledge of the beliefs associated with the cult and its ideological basis are mostly hypothetical, it has been possible to speak of continuity only in terms of survivals of iconographic forms. Some aspects of the beliefs and rites associated with the cult may also have survived in later history, but the nature of our evidence limits any speculation about them. It is not possible to say, for example, whether the worship of the female sex in the Tantric traditions, in the form of diagrams or in the live symbol of a nude woman in the so-called *Cakra-pūjā*,[175] has any relation-

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175. For the Tantric diagrams (*Yantras*) as the symbol of the sexual principles, see Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, pp. 137-48. For the Tantric *Cakra-pūjā*, see Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc.*, pp. 146-7; Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 203; Payne, *The Śāktas*, pp. 15 ff.; Kane, *HD*, V, pt. II, pp. 1089-90; see also Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, I, p. 220; Chakravarti, *The Tantras : Studies on their Religion and Literature*, p. 81; Woodroffe, Sir John, *Introduction to Tantra Śāstra*, pp. 74 ff. (ch. on "Worship"). An interesting sculpture from Bheraghat (10th cent. A.D.) shows under the lotus pedestal of the goddess a conspicuously large and quite realistic representation of the female genital organ, and just below it two bearded male figures facing each other, seated in an attitude of adoration, with hands clasped and heads bowed. The four-armed goddess herself is seated in the curious posture in which the soles of her feet meet in front of her. She is identified in the accompanying inscription as *Śrī Kāmadā*; see Banerji, *Haihayas of Tripuri and their Monuments*, p. 90, description of the fig. no. 78; also Sharma, *The Temple of Chaunsaṭha-Yoginī at Bheraghat*, pp. 54-5 and plates 12-13.

ship with the cult of the nude squatting goddess, even though an analogy is easily suggested. Tantrism itself is such a complex phenomenon of Indian religious history, and its origins are so obscure,[176] that any inference in this regard might be hazardous. However, keeping in mind the obvious parallelism, and the possibility, as suggested earlier, that folk cults of goddesses may have formed the nucleus of Tantrism,[177] it is not impossible that the cult of the nude squatting goddess had some meeting points with the beliefs and rites of the Tantric religion.

[176] Cf. Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, pp. 84 ff., esp. 87-8.
[177] See above, Ch. III, p. 171.

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Koṭavī

Describing the appearance of various evil omens in the enemies' camp when Harṣa got ready for his march of conquest, the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa refers to a certain Koṭavī, moving around all day long in the parks, shaking her index finger as if counting the dead.[1] The commentator Śaṅkara understands her as *nagnā strī*,[2] "naked woman", and in the same sense the word is listed in the Sanskrit lexicons.[3]

It is obvious that Koṭavī was not entirely an obscure figure. Her form and function must have been well understood in the time of Bāṇa even though neither the statement in the *Harṣacarita* nor its explanation by the commentator attribute any divinity to her. There are sufficient indications, however, that Koṭavī was one of the popular goddesses in northern India in our period, and in all probability, is to be connected to the ancient south Indian goddess Kor̲r̲avai.[4]

V.S. Agrawala seems to have been the first to point out the importance of Koṭavī in the religious life of northern India and the connection between Koṭavī of *Harṣacarita* and the south Indian goddess Kor̲r̲avai.[5] Agrawala identified as Koṭavī about a dozen terracotta figurines from Ahicchatra (Dist. Bareilly, U.P.), four of which are datable between A.D. 450 and 650, showing "a nude woman either moving with a bent body in a dishevelled and disconsolate posture, or simply standing, with right hand drawn parallel to the body and the left akimbo".[6] He also pointed to two local traditions in modern India; firstly, the existence of a shrine of the goddess Koṭamāī in the compus of Banaras Hindu University (Dist. Varanasi, U.P.),[7] and, secondly, a local tradition in the Almorah district (U.P.), where a place named Koṭalagarh is believed to have been a stronghold of "Koṭṭavi". The latter, according to the local belief, was regarded as the mother of the demon Bāṇa (Bāṇāsura), and was conceived of as having the upper half of her body covered with a shield (*kavaca*) while the lower half was always bare. As the tradition is recorded, when Bāṇa, the son of Bali, was once engaged in battle with Viṣṇu, the demon host, as soon as they were killed, were immediately replaced by the same number of fresh demons, and it was only when, by the gods' efforts, Mahākālī was born that Koṭṭavī as well as the demons were destroyed by her.[8] On this rather slender evidence, Agrawala came to the conclusion that the worship of Koṭavī may even now be much more widely spread over the whole of North India than at first appears.[9] He believed that the South Indian goddess may have been incorporated into the Hindu pantheon by the early Gupta period, "at any rate sometime before Bāṇa-bhaṭṭa", but the role assigned to her was inauspicious.[10] The Ahicchatra figurines, according to him, probably served an apotropaic purpose and may have been used as "offerings to ward off coming evil and ill-luck".[11]

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[1] *Harṣacarita* (ed. Kane), 6th *Ucchvāsa*, p. 52:

gaṇayantīva gatāyuṣas-tarjanataralayā tarjanyā divasamāṭa vāṭakeṣu koṭavī.

See also, *ibid.*, tr. Cowell & Thomas, p. 195.

[2] See *Harṣacarita* (ed. Führer), p. 272.

[3] See below.

[4] The transliteration of Tamil words in this chapter generally follows the system adopted in the *Tamil Lexicon*, but exceptions have been made in the case of words like Tamil, Sangam, Pāṇḍya, which are either often rendered without the transliteration marks or for which a different system of transliteration has become popular.

[5] Agrawala, "Terracotta Figurines of Ahichchhatrā, *etc.*", *AI*, 4, 1947-8, p. 151; by the same author, *Harṣacarita - Eka Sāṁskṛitika Adhyayana*, pp. 134-5.

[6] *AI*, 4, p. 151.

Whether or not the Ahicchatra figurines portray Koṭavī, enough evidence is available to prove Agrawala's conjecture about the popularity of this goddess. It would also appear that the modern tradition about Koṭalagarh is substantially based on old Purāṇic myths, and that a goddess named Koṭavī, Koṭarī or Koṭarā, malevolent in nature and connected with the battlefield, was already a popular figure in northern India in the Gupta period and probably still earlier.

The *Mahābhārata* includes Koṭarā in a long list of Mātṛs in the entourage of Skanda-Kārttikeya,[12] and, in the same place, the so-called Mothers are portrayed as divinities of markedly malevolent nature.[13] In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, in the story of the destruction of the child-ogress Putanā by Kṛṣṇa, Koṭarā is counted along with Ḍākinīs, Kūṣmāṇḍas, Mātṛs, Piśācas, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Revatī, Jyeṣṭhā, *etc.*, as an evil being, protection from whom is obtained by the performance of a certain apotropaic ritual which involved the recitation of the names of Viṣṇu.[14]

Koṭavī, Koṭarī or Koṭarā also appears in an important myth recorded in the Viṣṇuite *Purāṇas* like the *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata* as well as in the *Harivaṁśa*. All three texts describe in considerable detail the love of Aniruddha for Uṣā—the daughter of Bāṇāsura, the secret union of the two by the magical means devised by Uṣā's maid Citralekhā, the discovery of this secret and the arrest of Aniruddha by the enraged demon-king, and

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7. *Harṣacarita - Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 134, fn. 4.
8. *Ibid.* The tradition about Koṭalagarh is cited by Agrawala from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 15th May 1952, Hill Supplement, p. 3.
9. *Harṣacarita - Eka Sāṁskṛtika Adhyayana*, p. 134, fn. 4.
10. *AI*, 4, p. 151.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Mbh.*, IX.45.17.
13. *Mbh.*, IX.45.30-40.
14. *Bhā. P.*, X.6.27-9.

the eventual fight of Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu with Bāṇāsura to secure the release of his grandson.[15] In each version of the story, when Viṣṇu is getting ready to hurl his dreaded discus at the demon, Koṭavī appears in the battlefield to protect the latter. The nudity of Koṭavī is specifically noted and sometimes her dishevelled hair, and it is also generally pointed out that Viṣṇu had to close his eyes or turn his face away to be spread from her immodesty.[16]

There is a noticeable development in the myth as recorded in the three texts. At least as far as Koṭavī, Koṭarī or Koṭarā is concerned, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* seems to preserve the simpler and more original account, referring to her encounter with Kṛṣṇa briefly, without embellishment. Also it establishes no clear relationship between her and Bāṇa. Koṭarī is only qualified here by the epithet *daiteya-vidyā*, literally, "the (magical) lore of the demons",[17] and is probably to be understood as the tutelary deity of the demons.[18] The reference in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* is equally brief,[19] but there Koṭarā is the mother of Bāṇa, interceding for the protection of her son, and her form, when she appears before Kṛṣṇa, is further qualified by *mukta-śiroruhā*, "with dishevelled hair".[20] The story in

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15. *Viṣ. P.*, V.32-3; *Bhā. P.*, X.62-3; *Hv.*, 112.
16. *Viṣ. P.*, V.33.36-7 :

> *Muñcato bāṇanāśāya tataścakraṁ madhudviṣaḥ,*
> *Nagnā daiteyavidyābhut-koṭarī purato hareḥ.* 36
> *Tāmagrato harirdṛṣṭvā mīliṭākṣassudarśanam,*
> *Mumoca bāṇamuddiśyacchettuṁ bāhuvanaṁ ripoḥ.* 37

Bhā. P., X.63.20-1:

> *Tanmātā koṭarā nāma nagnā muktaśiroruhā,*
> *Puro'vatasthe kṛṣṇasya putraprāṇarirakṣayā.* 20
> *Tatastiryaṅmukho nagnāmanirīkṣan gadāgrajaḥ,*
> *Bāṇaśca tāvad virathaśchinnadhanvāviśat puram.* 21

Hv., 112.97-101 :

> *Cakrodyatakaraṁ dṛṣṭvā bhagavantaṁ raṇājire,*
> *Pramukhe vāsudevasya digvāsāḥ koṭavī sthitā.* 97
> *Antardhānamupāgamya tyaktvā sa vāsasī punaḥ,*
> *Paritrāṇāya bāṇasya vijayādhiṣṭhitā tataḥ,*
> *Bhūyaḥ sāmarṣatāmrākṣī vivastrāvasthitā raṇe.* 98
> *Bāṇasaṁrakṣaṇaparā vākyametaduvāca ha,*
> *Nārhase deva hantuṁ vai bāṇamapratimaṁ raṇe.* 99
> *Tataḥ kruddho mahābāhuḥ kṛṣṇaḥ praharatāṁ varaḥ,*
> *Provāca bāṇaṁ samare bhrāmayaṁścakramuttamam.* 100
> *Yudhyatāṁ yudhyatāṁ saṁkhye bhavatāṁ koṭavī sthitā,*
> *Aśaktānāmiva raṇe dhigbāṇa tava pauruṣam* 101

17. *Viṣ. P.*, V. 33.36, quoted above; *ibid.*, tr. Wilson, p. 468. Wilson, without warrant in the text, qualifies Koṭavī as "the mystical goddess". It may be noted that while the Gītā Press edition of the text, which is here used, reads the name of the goddess as Koṭarī, the text on which Wilson based his translation seems to have read Koṭavī.
18. Cf. *Viṣ. P.*, tr. Wilson, p. 468, n. 4.
19. The entire episode of the Bāṇa-Kṛṣṇa fight, however, appears in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in a developed form, with greater detail.
20. *Bhā. P.*, X.63.20, quoted above.

the *Harivaṁśa* is the most developed of the three. Not only is considerable space devoted in the text to the Uṣā-Aniruddha episode and the accompanying Bāṇa-Kṛṣṇa battle, but also Koṭavī makes her characteristic appearance more than once. It even adds Kṛṣṇa's verbal disapproval of her nakedness and a satirical comment on Bāṇa for seeking her aid.

As presented in the *Harivaṁśa*, before the engagement of Bāṇa and Kṛṣṇa in battle, Kārttikeya is portrayed as fighting the latter on behalf of the demon-king.[21] Just as in the Bāṇa episode, which is to come later, when Kṛṣṇa is getting ready to hurl his discus, the naked Koṭavī appears to save Kārttikeya. Kṛṣṇa rebukes her for her immodesty and asks her to leave the battlefield.[22] The reappearance of Koṭavī for the sake of Bāṇa is noted by Kṛṣṇa[23] and again a conversation is recorded between the two. It is said that Koṭavī requested Kṛsṇa to spare the life of the demon king, and Kṛṣṇa, greatly enraged, turned to Bāṇa and severely chided him for his unmanly conduct in repeatedly seeking the aid of Koṭavī.[24] Koṭavī is here called *Bāṇa-saṁrakṣaṇaparā*[25] and some colour has been added to her appearance by describing her as *sāmarṣa-tāmrākṣī*.[26] There is also more than usual emphasis on her nudity.[27]

The myth of the battle between Bāṇa and Kṛṣṇa, inasmuch as it aligns Śiva, Kārttikeya, *etc.*, with the demon-king,[28] has all the materials for the incorporation of Koṭavī into the Śivaite pantheon, but none of the three versions of the story specifically states that Koṭavī is identical with or a form of Śiva's consort.[29] That this was a natural

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21. *Hv.*, 112.33 ff..
22. *Ibid.*, 112.49.

    Vyavidhyamāne cakre tu kṛṣṇenāmitatejasā,
    Taṁ dṛṣṭvā pramukhe tasya vyatiṣṭhata ca kauṭavī,
    Apagacchāpagaccha tvaṁ dhigdhigityeva so'bravīt.
23. This is clearly implied in Kṛṣṇa's satirical comment on Bāṇa : see *Hv.*, 112.101, quoted above.
24. *Hv.*, 112.99-101, quyted above.
25. *Ibid.*, 112.99.
26. *Ibid.*, 112.98.
27. The nakedness of Koṭavī is not only expressed by the use of epithets like *digvāsāḥ* and *vivastrā*, but she is also described, somewhat incongruously, as disappearing and returning again after divesting herself of her clothes; *Hv.*, 112.97-8. It is also accentuated by Kṛṣṇa's vehement disapproval, about which the *Viṣṇu* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* are silent.
28. Bāṇa is portrayed as a great devotee of Śiva, for which the latter had granted him the boon of fearlessness; see *Viṣ. P.*, V. 33.43; *Bhā. P.*, X. 63.45; cf. also *ibid.*, X.63.49; *Hv.*, 112.110. According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and *Harivaṁśa*, Śiva always stayed with Bāṇa for the latter's protection; *Bha. P.*, X. 62.5; *Hv.*, 106.6. In *Hv.*, 106.5, Bāṇa is *rudraskandasahāyavān*.
29. It is interesting to note that in the large number of verses in the popular Calcutta, Bombay and Poona editions of the *Harivaṁśa* which are regarded as apocryphal in the Critical edition, Koṭavī not only occupies a very prominent place but also her absorption into the Śivaite pantheon is complete. To cite the Poona edition (ed. Kinjawadekar) as an instance, it is said that when Aniruddha was arrested and bound by Bāṇa, he sang a prayer to Devī Koṭavatī, at the end of which the goddess, here called the Mahādevī Durgā, appeared to grant protection to him (II.120.1-2, 35 ff.). The prayer itself begins with salutations to Caṇḍī, Kātyāyanī, *etc.* (*ibid.*, vv. 4 ff.). Later when Kārttikeya is in danger of being killed by Kṛṣṇa, Koṭavī is said to have appeared on the instructions of "Deva", apparently Śiva, and is specifically called "the eighth portion of Devī" (II.126.23). In the description of the Bāṇa-Kṛṣṇa fight, a much longer introduction is added to the account of (Contd.)

development, however, is fully attested by other texts.[30]

It is clear from the nature of development of the myth in the three texts that Koṭavī-Koṭarī-Koṭarā was essentially an independent figure in her own right. It is not certain whether she was first related to Bāṇāsura as his mother and then, when the demon-king was affiliated to the Śivaite circle, became a form of Śiva's spouse, or that the two were simultaneous results of a single process of myth-making. Both possibilities have to be conceded. In fact, since Śivaism is well known to have absorbed many unbrahmanical and demoniacal features in its fold, it is even possible that an independent goddess Koṭavī was first absorbed into the Śivaite circle, whence she was conceived as the mother of Bāṇa, although this appears less likely. In any case, the myth clearly establishes the wierd demoniacal nature of this goddess and seems to explain the peculiar statement in the *Harṣacarita* as well as the modern tradition about Koṭalagarh in Almorah district,

In the various versions of the Purāṇic myth analysed above, Koṭavī is connected with battleground, even though she herself does not engage in battle. Constant stress on her nudity, and, it would appear, sometimes also on her dishevelled hair, seem to have the ring almost of an iconographic prescription, but until her images are indubitably identified, it would be impossible to be certain of it. The figures from Ahicchatra may or may not represent Koṭavī. The "emphatic nudity" of the terracottas is by itself too slender a ground to make a definite identification. The same may be said of the so-called "dishevelled and disconsolate posture" of the figures. As for the pointing index finger of Koṭavī, it is attested only in the *Harṣacarita*, and there again apparently as an incidental gesture on her part rather than an inalienable characteristic of possible iconographic significance.

The evidence collected above from the epic and Purāṇic literature is enough to testify to a popular belief in the demoniacal figure variously called Koṭavī, Koṭarī or Koṭarā. The fact that no iconographic text describes her image may be understood as further indication that she was essentially a goddess of the common people. In fact there are definite indications that Koṭavī was not only a mythical figure but that she had her own shrines and sacred places, and possibly festivals were periodically held in her honour.

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the intercession of Koṭavī, in which she is said to have been deputed to her task by Rudrāṇī, on the initiative of Śiva (II.126.106 ff.). It also contains a longer dialogue between Koṭavī and Kṛṣṇa (II.126.114 ff.), where the latter addresses her as "the mother of Kārttikeya" (*ibid.*, v. 112). Further as Bāṇa is made a son of Śiva and Pārvatī and a younger brother of Kārttikeya (II.116.16-7), and Koṭavī as the mother of Bāṇa (cf. II.126.117,120), the identification of Koṭavī with Śiva's consort is easily suggested.

Since Koṭavī is sometimes also called Lambā or Lambamānā in the popular Poona edition of the *Harivaṁśa* (II.126.23, 108-9), it may be regarded as a measure of her popularity that Lambā appears in the list of the ferocious Mātṛs in the *Mahābhārata* (IX. 45.17), *Matsya* (179.23, 30) and the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa* (I.226.21,29). In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, XXI (*SBE*, XXI, pp. 373 ff.), she is called an ogress (*rākṣasī*).

[30] See below.

Perhaps the earliest reference to the cult of Koṭavī comes from the Jain canonical literature. *Ṇāyādhammakahā* refers to a *Koṭṭakiriyā-maha, i.e.*, a festival in honour of the goddess Koṭṭakiriyā (skt. Koṭṭakriyā),[31] which, in all probability, is another variant of the name of Koṭavī.[32] The commentator Abhayadeva Sūri equates Koṭṭakiriyā with Durgā riding a buffalo.[33] The date of the Jain canonical literature is uncertain, but on the whole, many texts incorporated in it, including *Ṇāyādhammakahā*, give impressions of great antiquity[34] and have been utilized to reconstruct the earliest state of the Jain teachings as well as the life in India in the centuries before the Christian era.[35] In any case, if the identification of Koṭṭakiriyā with Koṭavī is correct, which is highly probable, a popular cult of this goddess can be safely presumed in parts of North India in the early centuries of the Christian era, if not before.[36]

The *Matsya Purāṇa* also has interesting information about the Koṭavī-cult. In the context of a description of the family of Pitṛs, it records a discourse between Satī, who had mounted the funeral pyre to consume herself, and her father Dakṣa, grown sad on that account as well as owing to her foretelling the destruction of his sacrifice and himself at the hands of her husband.[37] Addressed by her father as "Mother of the Universe" and begged not to forsake him, Satī advised him to practise penance at her own sacred places after his sacrifice was destroyed, and went on to enumerate her different names and forms in which he would find her. In this context she instructs that she would be known as Koṭavī in Koṭitīrtha.[38] Since the names enumerated are specifically counted in the text to be one hundred and eight,[39] the list should be regarded as traditional and arbitrarily compiled,[40] and, therefore, of little historical value. Any relationship between the goddess Koṭavī and Koṭitirtha also appears imaginary, since several Koṭitirthas are known from the epic and Purāṇic literature[41] but nowhere is any relationship established between them and the goddess Koṭavī, except in the above-mentioned verse of the *Matsya Purāṇa* and in exactly similar verses in some other *Purāṇas* where also the one hundred and eight names and sacred places of Devī are recounted.[42] Nevertheless, the statement in the *Matsya Purāṇa* provides some evidence for the existence of the cult of the goddess Koṭavī, and attempts at absorption of it into the cult of the Great Goddess.[43]

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[31] *Ṇāyādhammakahā* (ed. Vaidya), 8, p. 100, as quoted by Jain, *Life in Ancient India as depicted in Jain Canon*, p. 215 and fn. 173. For *Maha* in the sense of popular religious festivals, see Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, pp. 4-5. *Maha* seems to be comparable to the Buddhist *samajjā*; cf. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, pp. 319-20. On *Samajjā* or *Samāja*, see *Pāli-English Dictionary* (PTS); Bhandarkar, D.R., "Epigraphic Notes & Questions: XIX—Aśoka's Rock Edict I. Reconsidered", *IA*, 1913, pp. 255-8; Majumdar, N.G., "Samāja", *IA*, 1918, pp. 221-3.

[32] Cf. Agrawala, *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, p. 7.

[33] *Ṇāyādhammakahā-ṭīkā*, 8,p. 138a, as quoted by Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 225 and fn. 261.According to *Pāia-Sadda-Mahaṇṇavo*, Koṭṭakiriyā is referred to in *Aṇuogadārasutta* and was the name of a fierce goddess like Durgā; the same Dictionary also lists Koṭṭā as a name of Gaurī-Pārvatī; see *ibid.*, p. 262.

[34] On the date of the Jain Canon, see Jacobi. *Jaina Sūtras*, pt. I (*SBE*, XXII), Introduction, pp. xxxvii ff.; cf. also Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, p. 117.

[35] The two representative examples would be Schubring, *The Doctrine of the Jainas*, and Jain, *op. cit.* . Schubring gives the summary of the contents of *Ṇāyādhammakahā*) in *op. cit.*, pp. 89 ff. .

[36] According to Agrawala, the *maha* referred to in the Jain text may be connected with the *navarātra* festival of the goddess Durgā observed in the bright half of the month of Āśvina, because it is sometimes called *Śābarotsava* and appears to have been originally of a gruesome nature; see *Prācīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma*, pp. 114-5. For a brief description of *Śābarotsava*, see Kane, *HD*, V, pt. I, pp. 176-7.

[37] *Mat. P.*, 13.12 ff..

[38] *Ibid.*, 13.37:

koṭavī koṭitīrthe tu.

[39] *Ibid.*, 13.54.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from another significant reference in the *Matsya Purāṇa*. It describes a *Saubhāgya-śayana-vrata*,[44] "the giver of all bliss", which was celebrated mainly in honour of Satī and in which the divine couple, Śiva and Parvati, was to be worshipped on the third day of the lunar fortnight of the month of Caitra—the day when they were supposed to have been united. In the detailed description of the ritual, rules are laid down for the worship of different parts of the bodies of the two deities, and, in that context, it is said that the abdomen of the Goddess should be

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40. See Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records, etc.*, p. 45, where he regards the verses 13.10 ff. of the *Matsya Purāṇa* as late interpolation by The Śāktas; cf. also Sircar, D.C., "he Śākta Pīṭhas", *JRASB,L*, XIV, no. 1, 1948, pp. 24 ff., where the development of the Śākta tradition of 108 names of the Goddess is traced, and the portion of the *Matsya Purāṇa* where it is found is assigned to the "early mediaeval period".

41. *Mbh.*, III. 80. 68; 81.14, 171; 82.23-4, 68; 83.58; also in *Mat. P.*, 106. 44; 191. 7-13, 55-7; see also Dikshitar, *Purāṇa Index*, I, s.v. *Koṭitīrtham.*

42. The same text about the 108 names of the Goddess is found in the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Skanda Purāṇa* and *Devībhāgavata*; see Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records, etc.*, p. 45, and Sircar, *op. cit.*, *JRASB,L*, XIV, 1948, p. 25. See below, for another mention of Koṭavī in the list of *Pīthas.*

43. It is interesting to note that the name of Koṭavī in slightly varying forms is persistent in the list of the *Pīṭhas*. The first *Pīṭha* or seat of the Goddess to be named in the late mediaeval *Pīṭhanirṇaya* (17th-18th century A.D.; see *JRASB,L*, XIV, 1948, pp. 3, 23-4), regarded as a section of the *Tantracūḍāmaṇi*, is Hiṅgulā and the form of the goddess associated with it is called Koṭṭarī. In the probable original of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* as reconstructed by Sircar, the verse reads (*ibid.*, p. 59, v. 4b-5a):

Brahmarandhraṁ hiṅgulābhyāṁ bhairavo bhīmalocanaḥ,
Koṭṭarī sā mahādevī triguṇā yā digambarī.

Hiṅgulā is identified with modern Hinglāj in Baluchistan. A locally-worshipped goddess called Bībī Nānī is, according to Sircar, probably the same as Nanā of the Kuṣāṇa coins.

The tradition of the *Pīṭhas* may be regarded as evidence of the wide proliferation of the Śakti-cult. Also, some names and forms of the Goddess localized in a place may be found to be based on historical facts (cf. Banerjea, J.N., "Identification of Some Ancient Indian Place-Names", *IHQ*, XIV, 1938, pp. 751 ff.; Sircar *JRASB,L*, XIV, 1948, pp. 8. ff.). But this has to be separately examined for each case. Generally speaking, as far as the cult of a special form of the Goddess at a particular place is concerned, the *Pīṭha*-lists are more imaginary than real (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 22 ff., 29ff. and 32 ff.). In the case of Koṭṭarī-Koṭavī, there is no independent evidence to show that she was really worshipped at Hiṅglāj. But, notwithstanding such a want of confirmation, Koṭavī's inclusion as a form of Devī in the list of the *Pīṭhas* speaks of the popularity of the goddess and her inclusion in the Śakti cult.

44. *Mat.P.*, 60. Even this chapter, along with several similar ones incorporating *Smṛti* material on *vrata etc.*, is regarded as a relatively late introduction into the *Purāṇa*; see Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records, etc.*, pp. 37 ff., esp. 39. This, however, does not affect our main argument.

worshipped by uttering: *Koṭavyai namaḥ*, "Salutations to (the goddess) Koṭavī".[45] Many of the names of the Goddess used here, *e.g.*, Jayā, Bhavānī, Gaurī, Varadā, Īśā, Īśānī, Maṅgalā, Rudrāṇī, Kālānalapriyā, Svāhā-Svadhā, Candrāmukhapriyā, Lalitā, Vāsavī, Bhīmograsama-rūpiṇī, are either quite familiar or are easily understandable of the Great Goddess in the light of her general nature as well as of her relationship with Śiva. Koṭavī is probably the only unfamiliar name, not so easily intelligible. It is obvious that she was an independent popular goddess of appreciable following, for which reason she was sought to be identified with Devī.[46]

Although no certain identification of an image of the goddess Koṭavī exists, there appears to be at least one significant historical evidence of the existence of her shrine in the Gujarat-Kathiawad region in the 6th-7th century A.D. A Valabhi copper-plate grant, found at Bhamodra-Mohota near Bhaunagar and dated in the (Valabhī) year 320 (=639-40 A.D.),[47] records that Mahārāja Droṇasiṁha, for the increase of the religious merit of his parents, instituted some kind of a grant for the goddess "Koṭṭamahikā-devī" who was established in the *svatala* of Trisaṅgamaka, and, as the grant had been interrupted for some reason, Mahārāja Dhruvasena II reconfirmed it for regular worship in the temple of the goddess, for any needed repairs, and possibly for the livelihood of the officiating priest or wandering mendicants staying in the temple. There is little doubt that this reference is again to the same goddess and Koṭṭamahikā is another variant of the name Koṭavī-Koṭarī-Koṭarā. Jackson, who edited the grant, also added the information that "a temple of Koṭṭarā-devī appears to be still in existence at Tarsamiā",[48] in Hathab district, with which the ancient Trisaṅgamaka is identified.[49] Koṭṭamahikā appears in this record as an independent, popular goddess, and the only indication of a Śivaite affiliation may be a *triśūla*-mark that follows the last word of the grant[50] and the fact that the two donor kings are known to have been devotees of Śiva.[51]

The above investigation makes it certain that Koṭavī, recorded variants of whose names are Koṭṭavī, Kauṭavī, Koṭarī, Koṭarā, Koṭṭakiriyā and Koṭṭamahikā, was an independent popular goddess in North India in the early centuries of the Christian era. She was principally conceived as of demoniacal nature and, as many similar deities were absorbed into Śivaism, she too was identified with Durgā-Pārvatī as the consort of Śiva. Nudity, dishevelled hair and a marked malevolence must be imagined as the essential characteristics of this goddess. This is not only apparent from the evidence collected above but also because the Sanskrit lexicons, though often aware of Koṭavī as a goddess and a form of Durgā-Ambikā-Caṇḍikā, uniformly preserve a very strong tradition of her name simply standing for a naked, forlorn and inauspicious woman. Thus *Amarakoṣa* has : *strī nagnikā koṭavī syāt*,[52] and the same meaning is repeated in its commentaries.[53] Similar examples are collected in the *Śabdakalpadruma* from the *Śabdaratnāvalī* and from Jaṭādhara.[54] Hemacandra's *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi* also has : *nagnā tu koṭavī*, on which the commentary elaborates : *nagnā vivastrā yoṣid muktakeśītyāgamaḥ, koṭena lajjāvaśād yāti koṭavī*, *i.e.*, "an undraped woman moving about with dishevelled hair and oppressed with deep shame".[55] A good literary use of the word *Koṭavī* in the sense of a naked woman comes from the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa where a cruel parricide king Unmattāvanti is described as : "Instigated by wretched companions, he exercised himself in the use of arms by hitting naked women in the hollow between their breasts with thrown daggers".[56] As it is clear from the commentary on the *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi*, cited above, the mediaeval lexicographers invented new etymologies to arrive at this meaning of Koṭavī.[57]

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[45] *Mat. P.*, 60. 20:
kukṣidvayaṁ ca koṭavyai . . . .

[46] It is tempting to think that the ritual prescription of uttering *Koṭavyai namaḥ* while worshipping the abdomen of the Goddess is inspired by the nudity of Koṭavī. But it may also suggest that Koṭavī was essentially a fertility goddess; see also below.

[47] Jackson, A.M.T., "Two New Valabhī Copper-plates", II - Grant of Dhruvasena II, *JBBRAS*, XX, 1897-1900, pp. 6 ff. .

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 7. Jackson does not note anything about the image enshrined.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 10, note.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 4, and p. 9: line 13 of the grant under reference. Sankalia imagines that Koṭṭamahikā may have been a local goddess or a form of Śiva's wife; see Sankalia, *Archaeology of Gujarat*. p. 218.

The lexicons and commentaries, however, as noted above, are also generally aware of the identification of Koṭavī with Durgā-Ambikā-Caṇḍikā. Thus a commentary on the *Amarakoṣa* identifies her with Caṇḍikā, understanding the word as denoting the goddess who kills demons of a wicked nature: *koṭaṁ kuṭilasvabhāvam rākṣasāsurādikam rīṇati hanti* (*iti koṭavī*).[58] *Dharaṇī* identifies her with Durgā, who destroyed the demon Durga, here equated with Koṭa.[59] Similar identification is established in the *Trikāṇḍa-śeṣa*,[60] and the *Kalpadrukoṣa* of Keśava enumerates Koṭavī as one of the forms of Ambikā.[61]

Agrawala's suggestion that the north Indian Koṭavī is the same as Koṟṟavai, the goddess worshipped by the ancient Tamils, is highly probable. It is not only suggested by the obvious phonetic similarities of the two names but also by the consideration of the facts that Koṟṟavai seems to have been the earliest and most important goddess of the ancient Tamils, that she was intimately connected with battlefied and had a pronounced demoniacal strain in her character, and finally that, in her later history in South India, she too was identified with Durgā-Kālī and absorbed into the Śivaite pantheon. In fact, so complete is this absorption that references to Koṟṟavai in her original form even in the earliest Tamil works are relatively rare.

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[52] *AK* (NSP. edn.), p. 98, line 1107.

[53] See *ibid.*, commentary, and *ŚKDr.*, II, p. 201, s.v. *Koṭavī.*

[54] *ŚKDr.*, II, p. 202, s.v. *Koṭṭavī.*

[55] *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi*, III. 98, and commentary, as quoted by Agrawala, *AI*, 4, p. 151 and fn. 2.

[56] *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, V. 440:

Ṣaṁpreritaḥ kusacivaiḥ śastrābhyāsaṁ cakāra saḥ,
Pāṭayan Kṣurikāghātaiḥ koṭavīstanakoṭaram.

The translation quoted in the text above follows *ibid.*, tr. Stein, I, p. 231.

[57] For other examples of such derivations where *koṭa* is equated with wickedness and shamelessness, see *ŚKDr.*, II, p. 201, s.v. *Koṭarī*, *Koṭavī.* A very different etymology is suggested in Böhtlingk and Roth, *SW*, 2, pp. 444-5, s.v. *Koṭṭavī.*

[58] *ŚKDr.*, II, p. 201, s. v. *Koṭarī.*

[59] *Ibid.*, s.v. *Koṭavī.*

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 202, s.v. *Koṭṭavī.*

[61] As quoted by Agrawala, *AI*, 4, p. 151 and fn. 3.

Koṟṟavai (pronounced Koṭṭravai) is believed to have been the dreaded goddess of the hunting, fighting tribes of the arid Pālai region—the name for the composite region of Mullai and Kuriñci–which was one of the so-called five regions of the earliest Tamil grammatical text *Tolkāppiyam*. In this work, there is a cryptic reference to "*Koṟṟavai-nilai*, after the victory has been won", which is explained by the commentator Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar in the words that after the fighting was over, the warriors went and prayed to Koṟṟavai, the goddess of victory, and on that occasion, they also gave a description of her form.[62] In *Kuṟuntokai*, which is perhaps the earliest among the anthologies of the Sangam classics, the mention of a goddess Cūli, "the one who holds the trident", to whom vows were made by women who prayed to her so that their husbands might achieve success in their mission and return safely,[63] has been regarded as a reference to Koṟṟavai,[64] although her name suggests Sanskritic-Śivaite influence. Amongst other works of the Sangam classics, in *Paripāṭal*, the red *tilaka* on the forehead of a young girl is said to resemble the third eye of Koṟṟavai.[65] In *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai*, Murukan is mentioned as the son of the victorious Koṟṟavai.[66] In *Neṭunalvāṭai*, where the king is depicted as absent on a distant military campaign and the queen sad and restless on account of the separation, the elderly ladies-in-waiting pray to Koṟṟavai, the goddess of victory, addressing her as "Mother", to grant speedy victory to the king and end the battle.[67] In all the instances cited above, except *Kuṟuntokai*, Koṟṟavai is referred to by name and, therefore, instantly recognizable, but the same goddess might be alluded to in several other places in the Sangam anthologies simply as the goddess of war and victory, as identical with the goddess of the forests, as one who performed the *tuṇaṅkai* dance, *etc.*.[68] Generally speaking, this is the type of evidence available in the Sangam literature about Koṟṟavai. Although the date of this literature is uncertain, we will not be far

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62. *Tolkāppiyam*, Puṟattiṇai Iyal 59, and Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar's commentary on it; cf. also Vipulananda, Swami, "The Development of Tamilian Religious Thought", *TC*, V, 1956, p. 254 and fn. 15; and Mudaliar, S. Arumuga, "Concepts of Religion in Sangam Literature and in Devotional Literature", *ibid.*, XI, 1964, p. 256.
63. *Kuṟuntokai* (ed. Swaminatha Iyer), poem no. 2, line 118, p. 461. See *ibid.*, intro., p. 9 about the editor's comments on the date of this collection.
64. Cf. Srinivasan, *Some Aspects of Religion as revealed by Early Monuments and Literature of the South*, p. 21.
65. In *Caṅka Ilakkiyam: Eṭṭut-tokaiyum Pattupāṭṭum* (Śaiva Siddhānta Mahāsamājam edn.), p. 798, line 99-100.
66. *Pattupāṭṭu*, ed Swaminatha Iyer, p. 27, line 258.
67. See Somasundaram Pillai, *A History of Tamil Literature*, pp. 249 ff., esp. 256-8.
68. Several such examples are collected by Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-2; see also Diehl, C.G., "The Goddess of Forests in Tamil Literature", *TC*, XI, 1964, p. 313.

wrong if we regard it as reflecting the conditions in South India in the first two or three centuries of the Christain era.[69]

Koṟṟavai appears prominently in the *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*—a grammatical treatise dealing with heroic themes. Even though the available text of this work is a comparatively late production–it may not be much older than *c.* 1000 A.D.[70]—the picture of the Tamil society presented in it is apparently much older. It seems to reveal the earliest stage of the South Indian tribes who were constantly at war with each other and frequently made raids for cattle-lifting, which is the main topic of the poems cited. Apart from the fact that a mythical origin is provided to the main theme and content of this work,[71] Rev. Pope has pointed out that the authors of *Kural*, *Nālaṭiyār*, and many other lesser poets seem to draw their material from it, and, in many respects, it provides an introduction to almost the whole of genuine poetry of the Tamil language.[72] He also suggested that even though the present text may be later, it should best be studied with *Puṟanāṉūṟu* and *Tolkāppiyam.*[73]

In the *Veṇpāmālai*, Koṟṟavai appears as the patron goddess of war-like tribal people constantly engaged in cattle-lifting raids.[74] She is described as leading the fighters in their attacks on the forts of the enemies and making them flee. While she thus leads, we are told, countless demons press around her; her beauteous banner bears the lion's form, and her hands grasp the golden parrot and the bounding stag.[75] This work also refers to the poetical theme of eulogizing a warrior on his destroying his enemies and feeding their dead bodies in a feast to devils and demonesses who are treated as deities in a sacrifice.[76] At the same place, the killing of the enemies is compared with ploughing a field.[77] The commentator Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar elaborates on the theme[78] by drawing a detailed comparison between a farmer reaping the ears of grain, heaping them in stacks, threshing them by driving bulls to trample over them, then offering oblations to gods, giving portions to beggars and enjoying the ceremonial meal with his kinsfolk, and the warrior king mowing down the enemies, piling up their dead bodies and getting elephants to trample over them, having the carcasses cooked by a virgin who stirred it in a huge pot containing blood and fat, and offering it as a libation to the gods. That this information should be regarded as having some basis in fact is suggested by parallel allusions in *Puṟanāṉūṟu.*[79]

[69] Cf. Srinivasa Iyengar, K.R., in Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 293; Pillai, Vainyapuri, in Sastri (ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India*, vol. 2, pp. 676 ff., esp. 682; and Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 461-2.

[70] Cf. Pope, Rev. G U., "Extracts from the Tamil *Purra-poruḷ Veṇbā-Mālai* and the *Purra-nāṉnūrru*", *JRAS*, 1899, p. 225; also Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, p. 52, where other authorities are also cited.

[71] *JRAS*, 1899, p. 225.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7; cf. similar opinions expressed by Kailasapathy, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

[74] Pope, *op. cit.*, *JRAS*, 1899, pp. 241-2.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 237, v. 20.

[76] *Puṛapporul Veṇpāmālai*, v. 159-60, cited by Kailasapathy, *op. cit.*, p. 241, fn. 5.

[77] *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*, v. 159, cited by Kailaspathy, *op. cit.*, p. 241, fn. 6.

[78] Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 241 and fn. 8, citing *Puranānūru*, 369, 372-3, *etc.*.

As Kailasapathy notes, an originally primitive ritual performed in honour of goddess Kor̲r̲avai seems to underlie this sacrifice to devils referred to in the heroic poem.[80] He noted the essentials of the ritual as: (1) it was performed at the end of a battle; (2) wholesale sacrifice of men and animals took place; (3)some sort of ritual cooking was done, making use of blood; and (4) priestesses officiated at the ceremony.[81]

The fierce demoniacal nature of the goddess and possible allusions to human sacrifice to appease her are also retained in the *Cilappatikāram*, even though the work is already thoroughly imbued with brahmanical ideas and there is considerable mixture of the concepts of Kor̲r̲avai and Durgā.[82] Canto XII of this epic, entitled *Vēttuvavari*, "the song of the hunters", is generally understood as giving the most detailed information about the form and appearance of this goddess.[83]

Canto XII of *Cilappatikāram* introduces us to the fierce goddess of the hunters of the Aiyan̲ar-Mar̲avar tribe, and although it calls her by many names and, mixed with Śivaite elements presents a somewhat syncretic picture of the goddess, there is no doubt that it principally refers to Kor̲r̲avai.[84] It would be useful to give a short summary of the contents of this part of the epic to appreciate the nature and significance of this ancient goddess of the Tamils. Canto XI of the epic ends with a spirit of the woods trying to lure the hero Kōvalan̲ and the latter uttering an invocation to "the goddess who rides a deer" to dispel her.[85] Kōvalan̲ and the tired heroine Kaṇṇaki walk up to a grove where they find a temple of Kāḷi, "whose eyes are tongues of fire and who lives in heaven worshipped by all the gods". She was the goddess of the cruel bandits who alone lived in that arid region, attacking travellers and carrying raids on the neighbouring countries. "The goddess gave them victory and expected a bloody sacrifice as a reward for her favour." The following Canto, no. XII, continues the account of these people and their fierce goddess, even though in its opening lines a change of scene seems implied.

Kōvalan̲ and Kaṇṇaki are said to have stopped near a lonely village in which there was a tample of "Aiyai", the goddess of the hunters of Mar̲avar-Aiyan̲ar tribes.[86] It was an ancient belief of the latter that the goddess would become incarnate in a virgin of that tribe. Kaṇṇaki—the heroine of the epic—is made to witness the transformation of one such virgin, Cālin̲i, into the form of the goddess. We are told that Cālin̲i began to perform a frenzied dance, her hair standing on end and hands flung up in wild fervour.

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80. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
82. Most of our references to this epic refer to its English translation by Alain Daniélou which follows the Tamil text established by Swaminatha Iyer.
83. Cf. *e.g.*, Venkataraman, K.R., "Śakti Cult in South India", in Bhattacharya, ed., *The Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, p. 252; Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, pp. 22 ff.; Mudaliar, *op. cit.*, *TC*, XI, 1964, pp. 256-7.
84. *Veṇpāmālai* also presents Kor̲r̲avai as the goddess of the Mar̲avar tribesmen; cf. Pope, *op. cit.*, *JRAS*, 1899, p. 242.
85. See *Cilappatikāram*, tr. Daniélou, pp. 75-6.
86. See *ibid.*, pp. 76 ff. for the contents of the canto XII of the *Cilappatikāram*. Srinivasan equates *Aiyai* with the Sanskrit *Āryā*; see Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

While the forest-folk looked at her with awe, she spoke: "The communal store-houses of the Aiyaṉars are empty; the fierce hunters of the Maṟavar tribe, forgetting their glorious art of looting travellers, are behaving like peasants. When the goddess who rides a stag is starved of offerings, she does not grant victory.... If you seek happiness, go, get drunk on strong wine and bring the goddess her dues". Cāliṉi then rode on a stag, silvery snakes entwined around the crescent-shaped tusk of a boar on her head, wearing a necklace of tiger's teeth and a short skirt of leopard-hide. Aiyaṉar women came to lay at her feet dolls, parrots, soft-feathered cockerels and blue peacocks, and played with balls of black beans for divination. They followed her carrying powders, fragrant unguents, boiled grain, pastries of sesamum seeds, rice cooked with meat, flowers, incense and perfumes. She was led to the temple of Aṇañku who feasts on cruel sacrifices and gives victory in return. The virgin prostrated herself before the goddess "who rides the stag". Suddenly, she became inspired and was transformed into "an apparition of the consort of Śiva".

The description of Cāliṉī transformed as the goddess[87] is full of Śivaite elements, although she is once specifically called Koṟṟavai.[88] It is said that the crescent moon shone on her matted locks. The eys in the centre of her forehead gazed unblinking. She had blood-red lips and shining teeth. Her neck was black with poison. Serpents served as her breast-band and girdle. An elephant-hide covered her shoulders and the hide of the lion formed her skirt. She carried bow and arrow and wielded blazing trident and sword. She is killer of demon Mahiṣa. Worshipped by all the gods, she is "Amari", the virgin goddess, the Gaurī, the sister of Viṣṇu, *etc.*. She is here also identified with Durgā, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī.

Several hymns of praise are introduced after the above description, in all of which the emphasis is on the fierce aspect of the goddess, riding the stag, who grants victory in war and deals death to enemies. Some of these take the form of a description of how, when the proud warriors of the Aiyaṉar tribe left their humble hamlets to carry raids on the enemies' cattle, they invoked this goddess, and, their raids successfully accomplished, made offerings of blood at her altar, even the blood flowing from their own severed heads.[89]

While the conception of Koṟṟavai in the "song of the hunters" in the *Cilappatikāram* is a very syncretic one, in which she appears identified with Aiyai, Aṇañku,

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[87] *Cilappatikāram*, tr. Daniélou, pp. 78-9. For the original in Tamil, see *Cilappatikāram*, ed. Swaminatha Iyer, pp. 313-4, lines 55-74. It is this description that is generally cited by modern scholars as a description of Koṟṟavai.

[88] *Cilappatikāram*, ed. Swaminatha Iyer, p. 314, line 64; see also below.

[89] See *Cilappatikāram*, tr. Daniélou, pp. 80-5, esp. *Tuṟaippāṭṭumatai* on pp. 83-4. This aspect of the character of the goddess is greatly elaborated in a chapter devoted to Koṟṟavai-Durgā in *Kaliṅkattupparaṇi*, a work of 12th cent. A.D., eulogizing the victory of a Coḷa king over Kaliṅga. See also Meenakshisundaram, T.P., "The Paraṇi Poetry", in *Proceedings of the First International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, April 1966* (ed. Xavier S. Thani Nayagam, *et al*), pp. 196-207.

Durgā, Kāḷi, *etc.*, elsewhere in the epic a distinction seems to be implied between her and some of these goddesses. Thus, when the bereaved Kaṉṉaki, full of wrath against the Pāṇḍyan king and seeking redress of injustice done to her, arrives at the palace-gates, the door-keeper reports to the king: "A woman is waiting at the gate. She is not Koṟṟavai, the victorious goddess who carries in her hand a glorious spear and stands upon the neck of a defeated buffalo losing its blood through its fresh wounds.[90] She is not Aṇañku, the youngest of the seven virgins, for whom Śiva once danced; and she is not Kāḷī who dwells in the darkest forests inhabited by ghosts and imps. Neither is she the goddess who pierced the chest of the mighty Tārukan . . ." [91]

Modern scholars have found references to Koṟṟavai-Durgā also in the *Maṇimēkalai*—another well-known Tamil epic contemporary with *Cilappatikāram*. This work sometimes refers to Kāṭamarcelvi and her temple, with the sacrificial altar in its front yard and surrounded by tall posts with severed heads suspended from them.[92]

It is clear from the above that Koṟṟavai was perhaps the earliest and the most widely worshipped goddess of the ancient Dravidian people. She was essentially a goddess of the semi-nomadic hunting tribes of South India who invoked her for success in cattle-raids and appeased her with bloody sacrifices. As presented in the Tamil heroic poems, there is no marked element of fertility in the character of Koṟṟavai, who remains primarily a goddess of war and victory. This, incidently, is also suggested by her name which is generally assumed to be derived from *koṟṟam*, meaning victory.[93] The *Tamil Lexicon* suggests *kol*, "to kill", as the basic root for these and other cognate words in Tamil.[94] But, considering that sacrifices of blood, including human blood, were made to Koṟṟavai, and virgin priestesses probably officiated in her worship, an original fertility character of this goddess is not unlikely.[95] In any case, Murukaṉ, with whom she stood in closest relationship as mother, seems to have been originally a dreaded fertility god, propitiated with orgiastic rituals involving frenzied dance by young girls and offerings of blood and flesh.[96]

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90. This is a clear allusion to Durgā Mahiṣamardinī.
91. *Cilappatikāram*, tr. Daniélou, canto XX, p. 127.
92. *Maṇimēkalai*, VI. 50-3; XVII. 115, as cited by Srinivasan, *Some Aspects of Religion as revealed by Early Monuments and Literature of the South*, p. 21. Srinivasan tentatively identifies Kāṭamarcelvi with Durgā or Caṇḍikā. Kāṭamarcelvi, "the great lady of the forest", is described in Akanāṉūṟu (345 : 3-7), as cited in Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, p. 21; cf. also Diehl, *op. cit.*, *TC*, XI, 1964, p. 312. The *Tamil Lexicoṉ*, as usual, calls her a form of Durgā; see *Tamil Lexicon*, II, pt. 1, p. 1167, s.v. Koṟṟavai and Koṟṟavai-nilai. Cf. also Venkataraman, *op. cit.*, Bhattacharya (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, p. 252, for Koṟṟavai-Durgā in *Maṇimēkalai.*
93. See Burrow and Emeneau, *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, p. 146a, no. 1803, where other cognate words in Dravidic languages are also cited.
94. *Tamil Lexicon*, II, pt. 1, p. 1167, s.v. *Koṟṟam.*
95. In ancient religions, human sacrifice is often found associated with vegetation-fertility goddesses; cf. Sullivan, *HR*, 4, 1964, p. 117, fn. 10, esp. citing Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 341 ff., and Przyluski, *La Grande Déesse*, pp. 30-1.
96. This is clear from the *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai*; see large extracts translated from it in Somasundaram Pillai, *A History of Tamil Literature*, p. 194 ff., esp. 212 ff., where *Kuṉṟutōrāṭal*, "the Gods' sport in the hills", and *Pa-lamutircōlai* are translated. See also Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, pp. 63 ff.; Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 314; Venkataraman, K.R., "Skanda Cult in South India", in Bhattacharya, ed., *The Cultural Heritage of India*, IV, pp. 309 ff..

In the bardic poems of the Sangam age, these ancient divinities of the earliest Tamils already appear with brahmanical colouring, but they have not completely lost their original character. While Koṟṟavai is identified with Durgā, Kāḷī, *etc.*, she continues to be the goddess of the ancient cattle-raiding tribes, riding her stag, leading the warriors in battle, and demanding her sacrifice of animal and human blood in return.

Little information of iconographical nature can be gleaned from incidental references to Koṟṟavai in the Sangam literature. What looks like such a description in the canto XII of the *Cilappatikāram* derives most of its elements from Durgā-Kāḷī as the spouse of Śiva. The one feature constantly noted about the goddess, however, but not generally described of Durgā or her common forms, is the reference to riding a stag. The stag as a *vāhana* is rarely met with and must be regarded as an early characteristic of Koṟṟavai in the Tamil country.[97] Durgā riding a stag must have been conceived under the influence of this South Indian goddess.[98] Such figures of Durgā have been noticed in the sculptures of the Pallava and contemporary Pāṇḍya and other dynasties from the 7th to the 10th century A.D.[99]

All the known aspects of Koṭavī, whose worship seems to have prevailed in North India in the early centuries of the Christian era, appear intelligible in the light of the South Indian Koṟṟavai. A marked demoniacal nature, close connection with battle-field, and eventual identification with Durgā-Ambikā and incorporation into the Śivaite pantheon are features that characterise both of them. There is nothing in the available information about the South Indian goddess, however, to justify the nudity of Koṭavī. Since there is little room for doubt that the two goddesses were originally and essentially one and the same, the only way this anomaly can be explained is by assuming that our information about the South Indian Koṟṟavai is still very fragmentary. Moreover, it is derived from a type of bardic literature which is imbued with brahmanical ideas and often presents ancient Tamil concepts in a modified form. In all likelihood, therefore, the North Indian tradition of a goddess called Koṭavī retains a still earlier tradition of Koṟṟavai when the latter was the dreaded nude fertility goddess of the South Indian primitive nomadic tribes.

Although the popular goddess Koṟṟavai has generally been ignored by the historians of religion in South India,[100] it has nevertheless been often acknowledged that she was the goddess of the ancient Dravidian tribes, and that her worship in South India was later merged with that of Durgā and still continued there in some form or the other.[101] What has not been realized is the very widespread nature of her cult and its contribution to the popular religious life in North India. Our investigation indicates that in the earliest stages of Dravidian religion, the worship of Kor̲r̲avai must have been universal, and thus, through the natural process of acculturation, must have gradually permeated into the brahmanical religions at a very early stage of its history, and also made its contribution to the development of the concept and cult of the Great Goddess of the *Purāṇas*.[102]

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[97] See Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, p. 23. We are not aware of any iconographic text specifically prescribing stag as the *vāhana* of a goddess.

[98] Some such literary descriptions are collected by Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] It is understandable that writers like Whitehead (*Village Gods of South India*), Elmore (*Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*) and Slater (*Dravidian Element in Indian Culture*) ignore Koṟṟavai because they generally aim at presenting a sketch of the religion in modern times, Oppert (*Original Inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa, etc.*), does not pay any attention to her, perhaps because in his times Tamil studies were yet in their infancy. It is surprising, however, that several recent studies specifically devoted to the history and culture of the Tamils and development of religion in South India completely ignore Koṟṟavai.

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[101] Several such instances have been noted in the course of this chapter. Particularly referred to is Pope, cited above, fn. 70. Referring to Pope, Smith inserted a brief notice about Kor̲r̲avai in his *Early History of India* (3rd ed., p. 439), which is the sole authority for the South Indian goddess quoted by Agrawala (*AI*, 4, fn. 151). See also Srinivas Iyengar, *History of the Tamils, etc.*, pp. 82, 603, and Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 312, 314.

[102] Cf. Renou, in Renou and Filliozat, *L'Inde Classique*, I, pp. 515, para. 1058, and p. 523, para. 1074; also Agrawala, cited above, p. 225, fn. 36. Filliozat's *Un texte tamoul de religion Kaumāra : Tirumurukār̲r̲uppatai* is a welcome addition to the literature on the subject. The book came very late in our hands and we have not been able to fully utilize it. However, as far as we could quickly see, the Purāṇic and some other Sanskritic material discussed here are probably not used in it.

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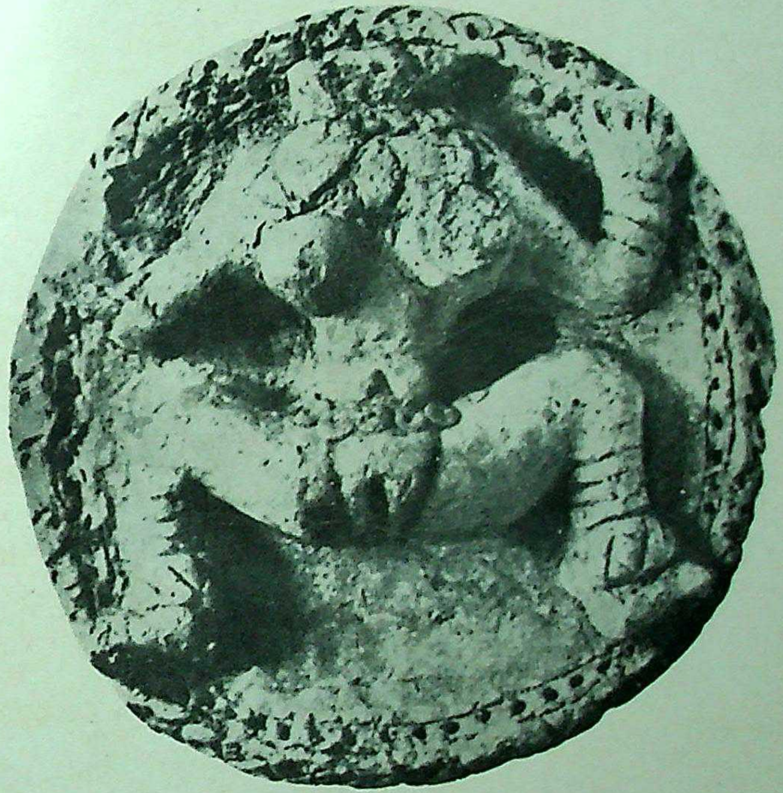
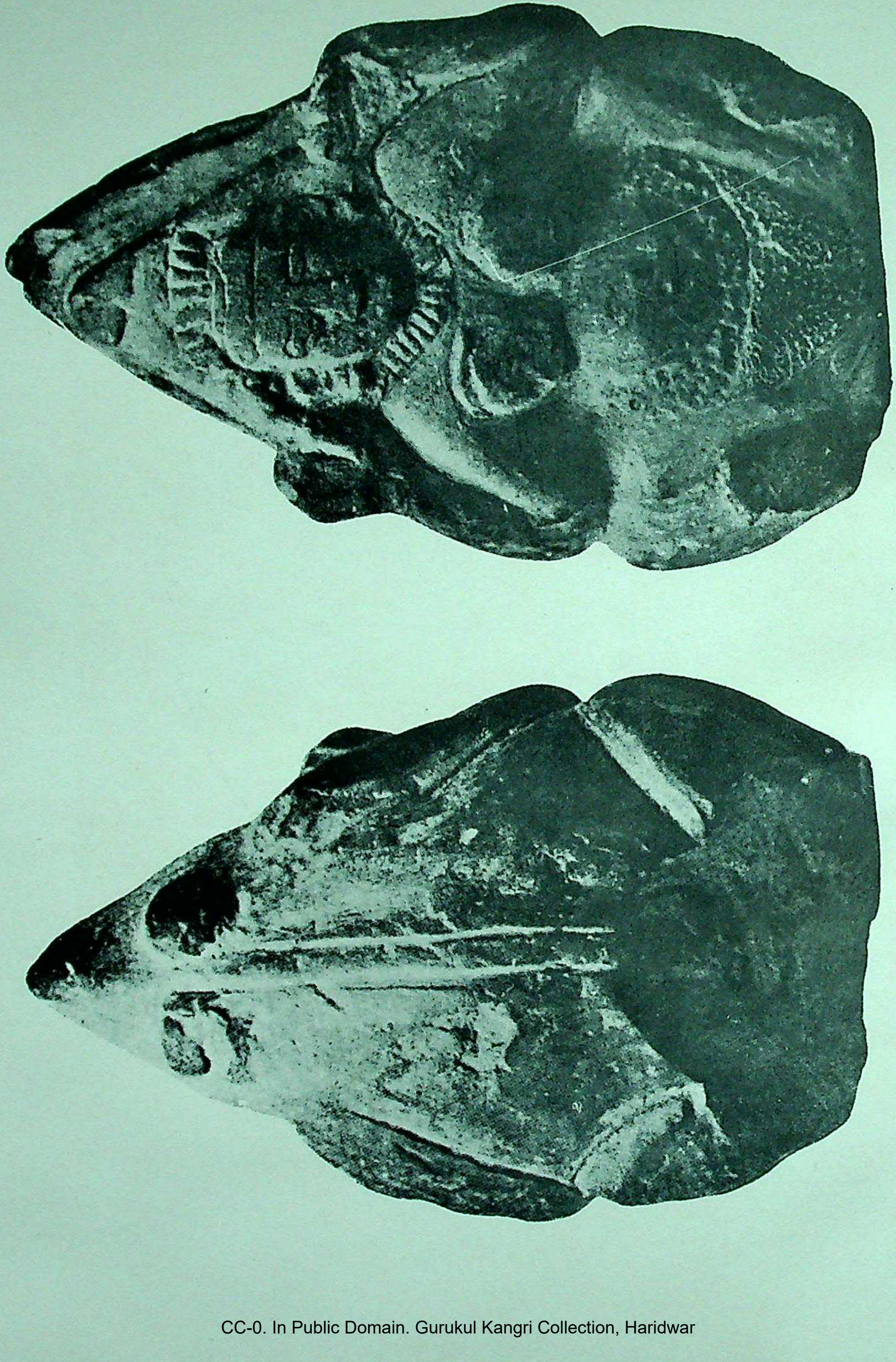


Fig. 1. Terracotta Plaque from Bhīṭā Excavations

PLATE II



Figs. 2 & 3. Top and Underside of Terracotta Piece from Mathura

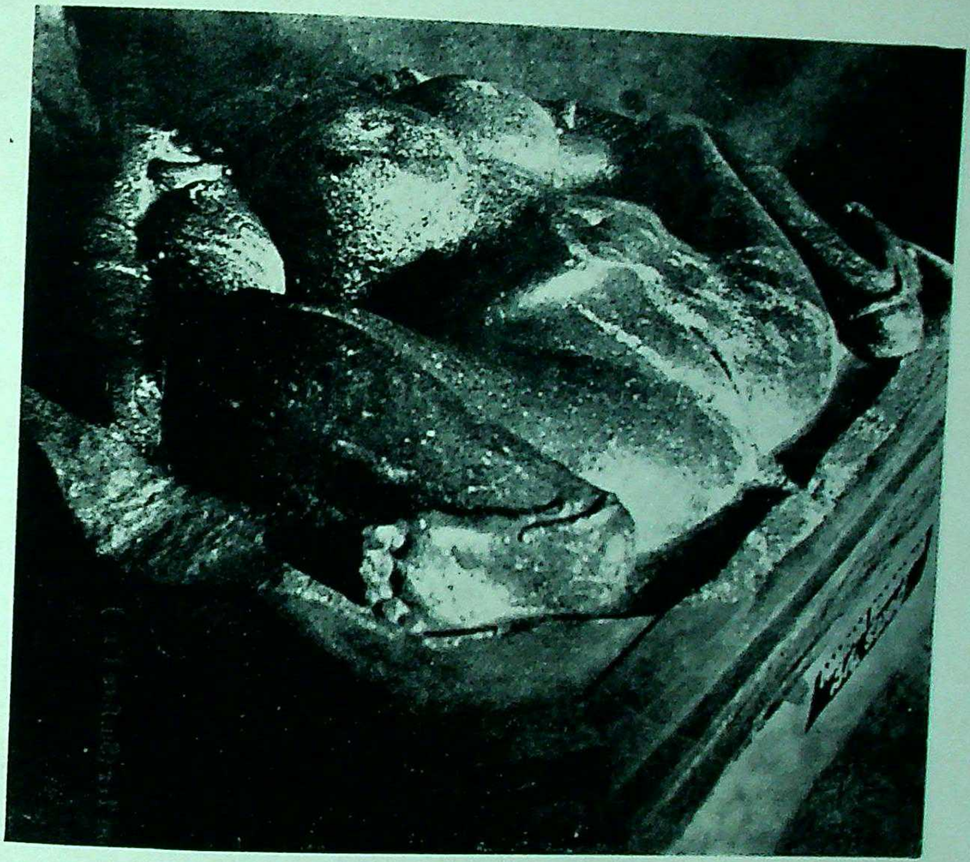


Fig. 4. Stone Image in Alampur Museum

PLATE IV

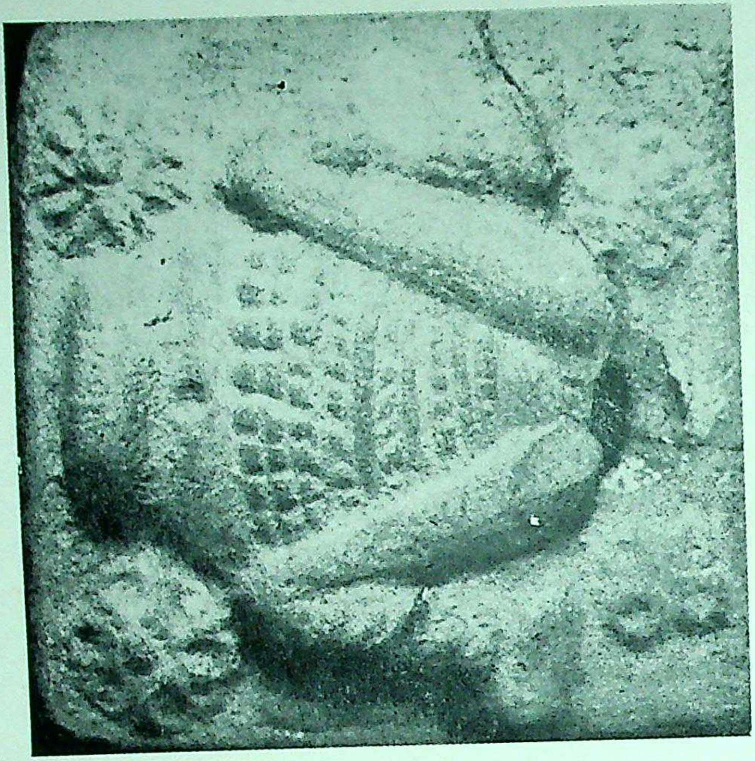


Fig. 6. Terracotta Figure from Ter Excavations

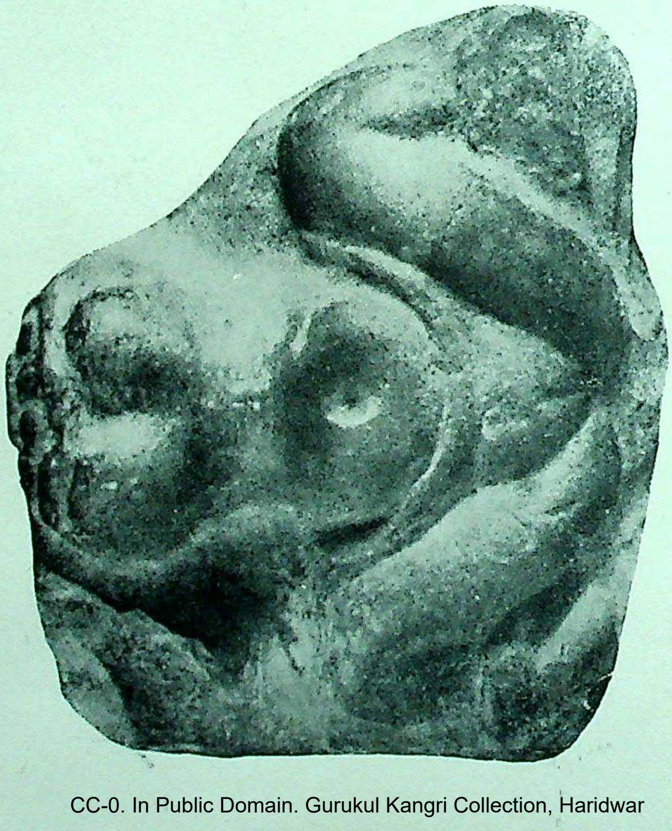


Fig. 5. Terracotta Figure from Ter (Surface Find)

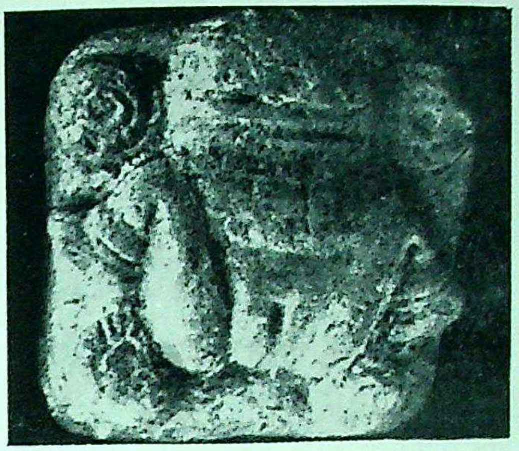


Fig. 7. Terracotta Figure from Nagarjunikonda

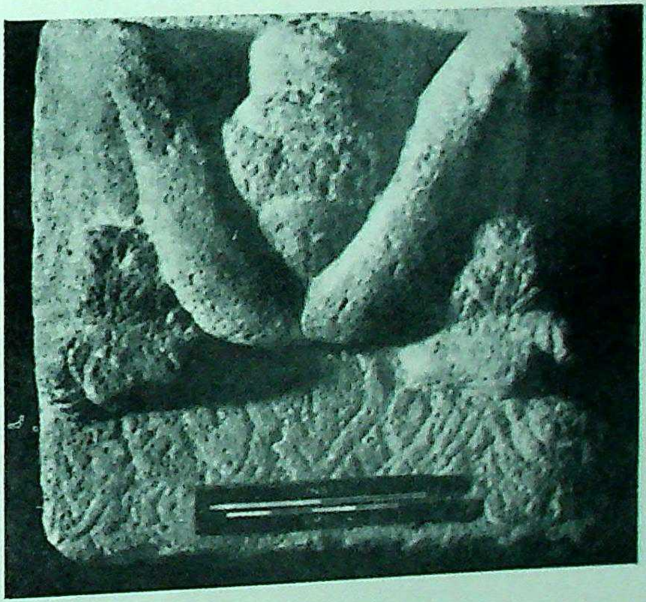


Fig. 8. Stone Relief from Nevasa Excavations

PLATE VI

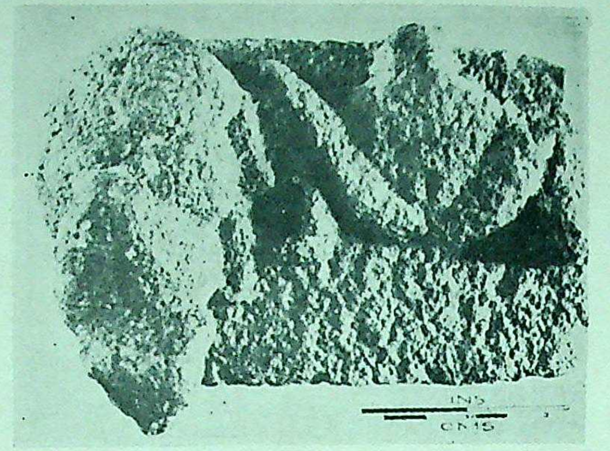


Fig. 9. Stone Relief from Vadgaon

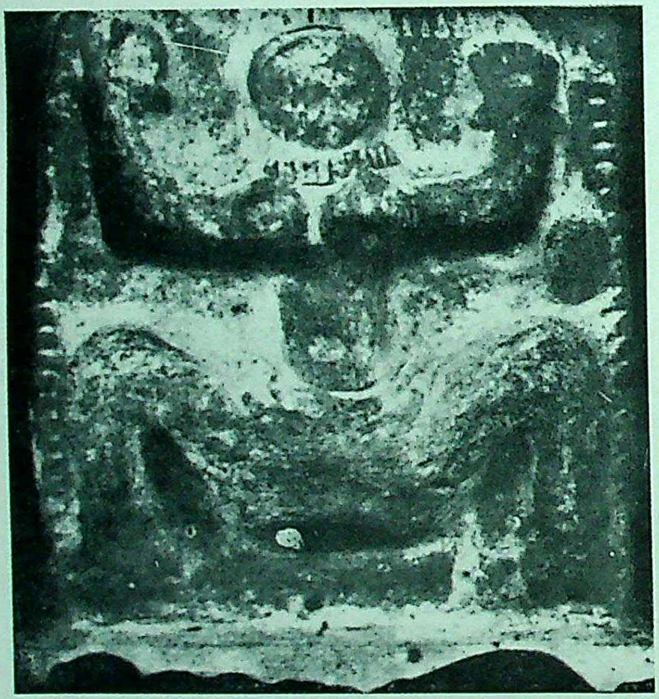


Fig. 10. Terracotta Figure in Patna Museum

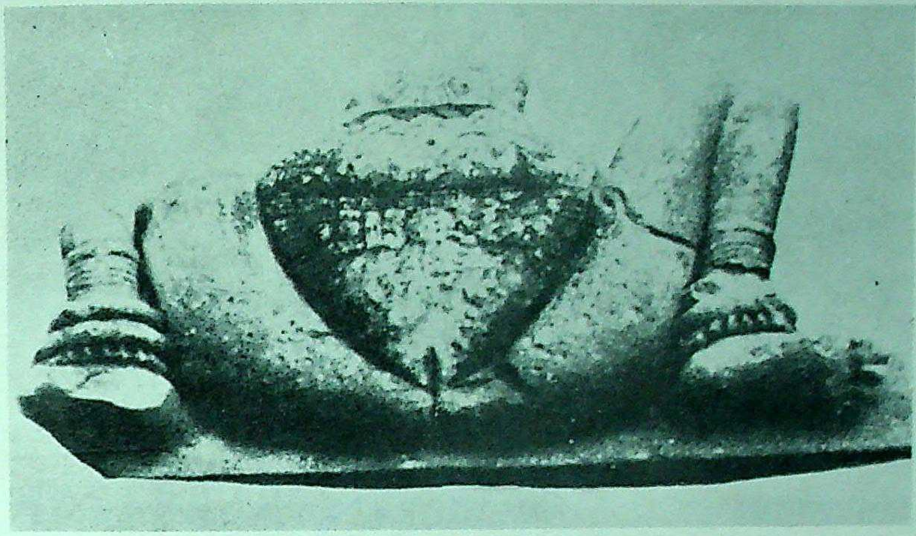


Fig. 11. Inscribed Marble Figure from Nagarjunikonda

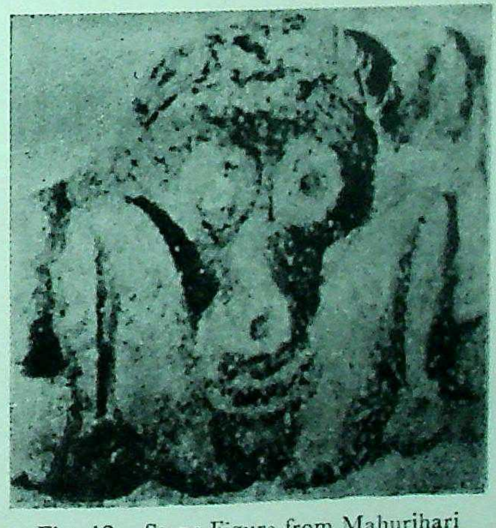
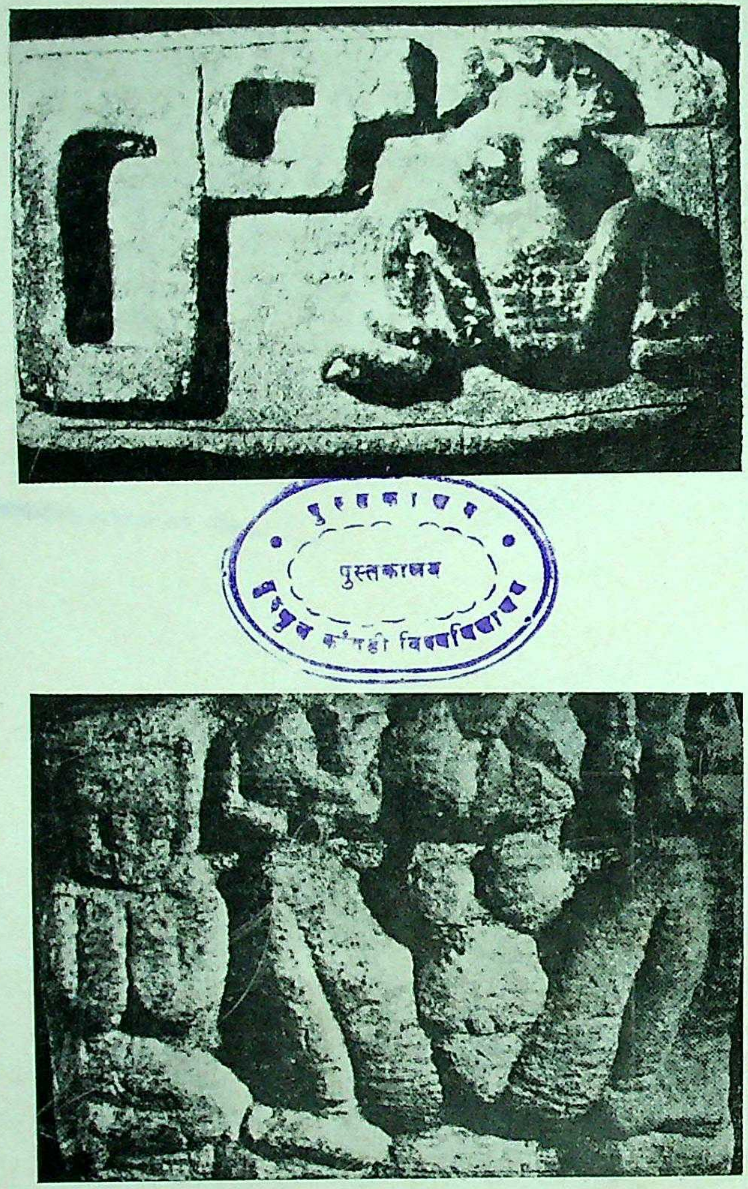


Fig. 12. Stone Figure from Mahurjhari



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Figs. 13 & 14. Figures in Central Museum, Nagpur

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GODDESS CULTS
IN ANCIENT INDIA

BY

J. N. TIWARI

Goddess Cults in Ancient India by J.N. Tiwari is an intensive study of some significant aspects of goddess worship during the early centuries of the Christian era. Two general features characterise this period : a very widespread belief in feminine divinities and evolution of the cult of the Great Goddess (Mahā-devī), and they are separately studied in the first part of the book. The second part is devoted to three select types of divinities of the period the Mātṛs, the Nude Squatting Goddess and Kotavī. Each study. though forming a necessary complement of others, is complete in itself. Both literary and archaeological sources have been thoroughly examined and copious documentation provided. Since the principal evidence for the Nude Goddess is sculptural-iconographic, illustrations have been provided for better appreciation of the arguments.

Feminine divinities were worshipped in some form all over the ancient world, but nowhere else do we find such bewildering variety and so complex a history as in India. Existing studies of ten ignore this fact and adopt a naive attitude. Tiwari designs his study on a frank admission of the complexity of Indian phenomenon, and it is his approach that one can only hope to fully appreciate it by intensively investigating significant moments in its history and closely studying as many individual figures as possible.

The book is full of new materials and fresh insights. The individual studies in the second part treat of their subject matter of the first time in such detail. In the first part also, the widespread belief in "goddesses" of all types has been demonstrated in a manner and with a depth never attempted before. On the question of evolution of the Great Goddess, Tiwari has serious reservations with the commonly accepted views which naively trace her from her possible pre-Vedic and Vedic origins and reconstruct the story of her rise mainly as the consort of Rudra-Siva. He prefers to understand the problem in its immediate historical background.

Jagdish Narain Tiwari holds an M.A. degree in Ancient Indian Histroy and Culture from the Banaras Hindu University and a Ph. D. in Asian Civilizations from the Australian National University. Dr. Tiwari is also the author of *Disposal of the Dead in the Mahābhārata* and several research papers on the history of ancient Indian religions.

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